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# Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Catholicism, 1932-1936.

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FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT AND AMERICAN  
CATHOLICISM, 1932-1936.**

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FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT AND AMERICAN CATHOLICISM,

1932-1936

A Dissertation

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Louisiana State University and  
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by

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## ABSTRACT

It is the major thesis of this paper that American Catholics were given recognition as a major force in society and were raised to "a new level of association" during the first administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. In presenting this argument, the terms Catholic Church and American Catholics are used interchangeably. The expressions of the Church are derived from Catholic newspapers and periodicals, from the statements of leading churchmen and laymen, and from the positions taken by major Catholic organizations.

Although the decision of the Democratic party to nominate Roosevelt instead of Al Smith in 1932 generated some Catholic resentment, this did not have any effect on the election results in November. Roosevelt touched a sympathetic note during the campaign when he quoted from the Papal encyclicals to prove that his program was no more radical than the Pope's. In November, Roosevelt swept to victory in all the large urban areas of the United States.

In 1932, American Catholics faced the depression and the new President with a concrete program of social reform.

This program was based on the past statements of the American bishops, on the work of various individual priests, and on the Papal encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI. Some of the proposals embodied in this program were: a living wage for labor, minimum-wage laws, the right of government to intervene in the economy for the "common good," old-age insurance, and government recognition of labor's right to organize. In many ways, American Catholics were intellectually prepared for the type of innovation which Roosevelt brought to the American scene.

In 1933, it became apparent that much of the enthusiastic response generated among Catholics for Roosevelt's program was the result of the special interpretation being given the New Deal by many Catholic sources. To many such observers, the New Deal represented a significant attempt to institutionalize the Papal economic program in the United States.

While foreign affairs were undoubtedly secondary to domestic legislation during the first Roosevelt administration, certain issues developed which had special meaning for American Catholics. The President's decision to extend diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union was opposed by

the Catholic Church as not being in the best interest of the United States. Roosevelt was aware of Catholic opposition to recognition and took steps to ameliorate it. The President incorporated in the terms of recognition a guarantee of religious liberty for Americans in Russia.

The second issue of foreign affairs which attracted considerable Catholic attention revolved around the anti-clerical policies being pursued by the Mexican government in 1934 and 1935. American Catholics were incensed by what seemed unwarranted persecution of their brethren south of the border. Certain Catholic groups began a campaign to pressure Roosevelt into intervening in Mexico to alleviate the persecution. While Roosevelt was not opposed to making statements in favor of religious liberty--statements which could reasonably be assumed to answer the demands of American Catholics--he refused to actively intervene in the internal affairs of a foreign country.

During the presidential election of 1936, two of Roosevelt's major critics were prominent Catholic figures--Al Smith and Reverend Charles Coughlin. While some politicians feared lest these voices be heeded by Catholic Democrats, others, including the President, were reassured

by the support received from such Catholic notables as George Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago and Reverend John A. Ryan of Washington. While taking no official action against Coughlin, a large segment of the Church expressed pro-Roosevelt opinions before the election. The election results of 1936 indicated that American Catholics had remained faithful to the Democratic party.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected President of the United States. Few Roman Catholics realized it at the time, but this event was to initiate a new era in their Church's place in American society. Disturbed and made insecure by the campaign of 1928,<sup>1</sup> the Church, represented by the hierarchy and by individual members, was to reach a degree of recognition and intimacy under Roosevelt that would have astounded their forefathers. This state of affairs was the result of two forces: the political acumen of Franklin Roosevelt and the largely fortuitous similarity between much

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<sup>1</sup>Writing in 1955, Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York, 1955), p. 300, said that Roman Catholics in the United States never really recovered from the 1928 "trauma" and that this had made impossible their "effort at assimilation" and attempts "at the achievement of full American identity." Lowell Dyson, "The Quest for Power: Father Coughlin and the Election of 1936," (unpublished M.A. thesis, Columbia University, 1937), p. 66, speaks of the Roman Catholic's need "to belong" after the 1928 election and of how Father Coughlin fitted into the picture because he translated the social encyclicals of the Popes into Populist or native American terms. Oscar Handlin, Al Smith and His America (Boston, 1958), p. 188, recognizes the frustration of American Catholics after 1928, but he feels that this sense of alienation was never removed but only submerged by the economic crisis of the 1930's.

of the New Deal's reform legislation and the social and economic teachings of the Church.

If, as one observer has remarked, "the Depression and Roosevelt years . . . were a providential opportunity for Catholics . . . to make their voices heard in changing the nation's social situation,"<sup>2</sup> it was no less a time when the President recognized the power and influence which could be exerted by American Catholics. Samuel Lubell has stated that it was Al Smith who, in 1928, awakened the urban masses, largely Roman Catholic, to a political consciousness and a sympathy for the Democratic party. It should also be pointed out that subsequently it was FDR who maintained the allegiance of American Catholics toward the party by the recognition he extended them and the finesse with which he treated them.

It is also clear that the New Deal provoked a true social consciousness among many Catholics. Lubell has stated:

The quickened pace of social change touched off by the depression and New Deal forced the Church leaders to become articulate on all sorts of questions which had lain dormant during the 1920's like the expanding role of the government, the sharpened class cleavage which the Roosevelt Revolution brought and the dramatic extension of trade unionism into the mass production industries

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<sup>2</sup>Francis J. Lally, The Catholic Church in a Changing America (Boston, 1962), p. 48.

where Catholic workers were so heavily concentrated.<sup>3</sup>

But this opportunity to contribute to the economic dialogue was only one facet of the sense of belonging achieved by American Catholics under President Roosevelt. Unfortunately, the story of how Roosevelt exploited this frustration has to be gained from indirect sources, since the President himself very seldom spoke from this point of view. Yet enough evidence exists to show that he was aware of American Catholics as a political force of no small consequence.

This essay, however, attempts primarily to tell the story from the point of view of American Catholics and how they reacted to the New Deal in domestic and foreign affairs from 1932 to 1936.<sup>4</sup> Events of the 1930's in many cases evoked the same response from Catholics as they did from every other American citizen. This essay attempts to discuss Catholic reaction to the major events of the period and the

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<sup>3</sup>Samuel Lubell, The Future of American Politics (2nd ed., rev.; New York, 1956), p. 236.

<sup>4</sup>The term "American Catholics" is used interchangeably with the term "the Catholic Church." My use of both terms will be defended later. Generally they imply the public opinions of the Church hierarchy, the Catholic press, prominent Catholic spokesmen, and various Church-affiliated groups such as the Knights of Columbus. The analysis is largely limited to these sources, since most Church archives for this period are still closed.



reasons for their particular response.

My major thesis is that it was under Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal that American Catholics were given recognition as a major force in society and were raised to "a new level of association . . . indicating a change in the 'official' American attitude toward the Church, and equally important, in the Church's disposition toward the government."<sup>5</sup> But this major thesis involves many subsidiary

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<sup>5</sup>This statement is made by Lally, The Catholic Church in a Changing America, p. 48, but he does little to support it with historical evidence. It is my hope that this dissertation will add the support of historical scholarship to what I consider a correct and penetrating observation. Other authors who have struck a similar theme include William V. Shannon, The American Irish (New York, 1964), p. 327, who speaks of new opportunity under Roosevelt but limits his analysis to American Irish. Allen Guttman, The Wound in the Heart: America and the Spanish Civil War (New York, 1962), p. 45, says that members of the Catholic hierarchy had been trying to "accommodate themselves to American Society" for years, but only succeeded in the New Deal. At this time, the Church gained an importance it had "never enjoyed in any other administration." The appointments of Farley and Kennedy, for example, made Catholics forget the bigotry of 1928. William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal (New York, 1963), p. 332, recognizes that many new groups received recognition under FDR but, significantly, he says: "equal representation for religious groups became so well accepted that, as one priest wryly complained, one never saw a picture of a priest in a newspaper unless he was flanked on either side by a minister and a rabbi." It might be added that for Catholics this equal time represented a gain in status.

findings which will unfold with the story. For example, much New Deal reform legislation was accepted eagerly by American Catholics because it was presented to them, by their leaders, as an American version of the Papal encyclicals. In this sense the New Deal liberalized American Catholics by showing them how radical were the Church's teaching on social problems.

I fully realize that there are weighty problems to encounter in any such study as proposed in the foregoing paragraphs. Perhaps some criticism can be eliminated if it is stated at the outset that this paper does not attempt to discuss the theoretical, and largely philosophical, problem of the proper relationship between church and state. This particular problem has been debated through the ages from Augustine to John Courtney Murray. It seems, however, that we can recognize at least the fundamental connection between church and state without getting into the knotty problem of the proper order of this relationship. Taking the liberty of defining the terms of my own argument, I propose to surmount the difficulty of church-state relations by simply pointing out that both institutions operate through temporal forces and on the same group of people. This congruence necessarily involves infringement by both church and state

on each other's interest, for the spiritual and temporal concerns of man are not easily divided.

Two prominent Catholic voices of the 1930's discussed this problem of church and state in terms that may well have reflected the attitude of the majority of their co-religionist about the issue. Reverend Wilfrid Parsons, S.J., pointed out in true scholastic fashion that, since politics is concerned with the art of governing, which is concerned with ethics, and since ethics is really the science of morals, which is the concern of the Church, therefore, "the Church is interested in politics, since she is the guardian of Faith and Morals." If the political problems involved concern only secular things and not "fundamental moral issues, the Church not only leaves you free to cooperate with your party, but makes no claim to intervene in political issues." The difficulty here, of course, is that the Church reserves to itself the right to decide when fundamental moral issues are involved.<sup>6</sup> Another major Catholic figure of the 1930's, Reverend James Gillis, editor of The Catholic World, was heard to say that it is both impossible and undesirable to completely eliminate religion from political conduct, for it

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<sup>6</sup>Rev. Wilfrid Parsons, S.J., "Some Things New and Old," The Catholic Mind, XXXVIII (December 8, 1940), 518.

should serve as a purifying element.<sup>7</sup> These two opinions probably reflected the thinking of many Catholic priests on the problem of the Church and politics. The opinions might be condemned by the more sophisticated as being inadequate for such a profound subject, but they appear adequate enough for most Catholics.

Another tricky problem in a study of this kind, which might lead to criticism, is the use of group terms. It is important to note that when I speak of "the Catholic Church," I am referring to that institution on a purely secular level.<sup>8</sup> Some critics would deny any use of the term "American Catholic Church," because there is no one central controlling body in America and because each bishop is largely autonomous in his diocese. Furthermore, argue these critics, the bishoprics differ widely in problems, affluence, and ethnic make-up.<sup>9</sup> Yet it seems clear that there is enough centralization and enough community of attitude to permit one the

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<sup>7</sup>The Boston Pilot, November 10, 1932, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup>See Will Herberg, Protestant, Catholic, Jew (Anchor ed., 1960), p. 4, for the same distinction.

<sup>9</sup>Reverend Thomas McAvoy, "The Catholic Church in the United States," in The Catholic Church in World Affairs, eds. Waldemar Gurian and M. A. Fitzsimmons (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1954), p. 361.

license of the term "American Catholic Church." We see the statements of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), which the bishops of the United States often use to publicize their collegiate attitude toward a problem. We see the Catholic press, which depends largely on the news service of the NCWC, as another source permitting an isolation of Catholic opinion. Furthermore, my research for this study revealed a high degree of unanimity among the Catholic press and lay groups toward public questions such as American recognition of Russia and the effectiveness of New Deal legislation. Certainly I make no claim of unanimous opinion for American Catholics. There does seem to be, however, a great similarity in the opinions expressed by the "public mind" of the Church, as seen in the public statements of the hierarchy, of prominent prelates and laymen, the editorial opinion of the Catholic press, and the resolutions passed by various Catholic societies on key issues during the 1930's; there is enough to make such a study as this worthwhile.

There is also a problem in labeling individuals as spokesmen for one group when they may not be acting for that group at all.<sup>10</sup> Church membership is only one of many

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<sup>10</sup>R. M. Darrow, "Catholic Political Power: A Study of the Activities of the American Catholic Church on behalf

memberships claiming an individual's allegiance. The pluralism of American society makes difficult the delineation of one overriding motive for an individual action, and the much maligned American "individualism" has permeated the Catholic's relationship with his Church and made blind obedience as outdated as the Inquisition.<sup>11</sup> In fact, certain studies have shown that among Protestants, at least, those who are deeply committed to their church are those who feel most strongly that the church should stay out of politics. Conversely this means that those members who find the voice of their church most meaningful are those who would most vigorously deny the church a voice on political issues.<sup>12</sup>

Another term in this study certain to cause difficulty is "the Catholic vote." This particular phrase has proved

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of Franco. . . ." (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1953), p. iii, admits the distinction of individual churchmen and the Church but remarks: "this delicate problem of judgment hardly calls for refusing to recognize that the Church acts as an organized institution through denying its temporal existence."

<sup>11</sup>R. M. Darrow, "The Church and Techniques of Political Action," in Religion in American Life, eds. James W. Smith and A. L. Jamison (4 vols.; Princeton, 1961), II, 170-71.

<sup>12</sup>Charles Glock, "The Political Role of the Church as Defined by Its Parishioners," Public Opinion Quarterly, XVIII (1954-1955), 337.

very offensive to many Catholic prelates, one of whom has called it "one of the greatest myths of American politics."<sup>13</sup> Usually an offense is taken because such a concept indicates a captive and precommitted segment of the public, and impugns the intelligence of the individual Catholic. Furthermore, some political scientists would deny historians the ability to even interpret voting in such terms because of insufficient data and weak conceptual tools.<sup>14</sup> Others say that the Church can no more influence its members to vote one way than can labor unions, and that much of the Church's political power is based on bluff.<sup>15</sup>

Yet the fact remains that practically all political

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<sup>13</sup>Peter H. Odegard, "Catholicism and Elections in the United States," in Religion and Politics, ed. Peter H. Odegard (Rutgers University, 1960), p. 125, where Rev. Thomas McAvoy is quoted. See also the following: Elmer Roper, "The Myth of the Catholic Vote," in Religion and Politics, p. 152, who says Catholics are "just as free . . . unfettered and just as divided . . . as any other group"; Reverend George B. Ford, Interview in Columbia University Oral History Project, p. 105, who says there is no Catholic vote because Catholics owe allegiance to the Church only on matters of faith and morals.

<sup>14</sup>Lee Benson, "Research Problems in American Political Historiography," in Common Frontiers of the Social Sciences, ed. Mirra Komarovsky (Glencoe, Illinois, 1958), p. 114.

<sup>15</sup>Herbert C. Pell, Interview in Columbia University Oral History Project, pp. 358, 360.

analysts talk in terms of a "Catholic vote."<sup>16</sup> It is also clear that Roosevelt was only one of many politicians who believed there was such a vote and acted accordingly.<sup>17</sup> Finally, there is no disputing the fact that many prominent Catholic figures spoke in terms of influencing their co-religionists to vote a certain way.

Perhaps some of the difficulty and offensiveness of the term can be eliminated if we dispel the idea that the Catholic vote is "captive" and "pre-committed." To say that FDR received the Catholic vote implies neither of the above traits. One does not have to propose that priests dictated to the laity on public matters, but merely that acceptance and advocacy by priests of a certain attitude might be "filtered through to their religious communities."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Samuel Lubell is only one of many who use the term. Of interest here is a recent issue of Newsweek (November 2, 1964) which carried an article by Lou Harris, public opinion analyst, which indicated that President Johnson would get as much of "the Catholic vote" as had President Kennedy.

<sup>17</sup>James Farley and Thomas Corcoran are two others who accept the term. James Farley, Interview with author, March 20, 1965, Washington, D. C.; Thomas Corcoran, Interview with author, July 15, 1965, Washington, D. C.

<sup>18</sup>Odegard, "Catholicism and Elections," p. 120, says, "It is not unlikely that some parishioners . . . simply follow the lead of their priest as an expression of group solidarity so frequently found among Catholics."



Roosevelt, in particular, realized the freedom of this vote to shift allegiance, because he was constantly on guard lest he offend the Church and lose Catholic support.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps he had too simplified a view of the Church's ability to shift votes, but his belief that respect for the Church could only help him among Catholics seems well grounded.

When I speak of Catholics supporting FDR, I mean that, during the period 1932 to 1936, they generally felt that their place in American society was more secure under his guidance than under what his opponents offered. But this interpretation might provoke the question, Why then distinguish the voters' religious affiliation at all? I feel that religious affiliation was important because the public mind of the Catholic Church did involve itself with public issues during this period. The Catholic press,<sup>20</sup> the hierarchy, and various lay organizations did take stands on

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<sup>19</sup>Jim Farley remarked that FDR had great respect for the power of the American hierarchy. Farley interview.

<sup>20</sup>Darrow, "Catholic Political Power," p. 21, says in 1936 the Catholic press consisted of 134 newspapers, with a circulation of 2.3 million; 198 magazines, with a circulation of 4.6 million; and various other publications for a total circulation of 8.9 million. All of these organs depended largely upon the NCWC news service for national coverage at this time according to Rev. George Higgins, NCWC, Interview with author, April 29, 1965, Washington, D. C.

issues of national consequence. While this public pressure was not always decisive for the individual Catholic, it was one of the forces affecting his opinion and consequent political behavior toward an issue, and as such should be examined.

It should be made clear at this point that no criticism is implied regarding the Church's interest in public questions. Indeed it is impossible for the Church to remain isolated from the currents of the times. When one considers that politicians are aware of the Church's strength in changing public opinion, it becomes obvious that they should "give churches their due as part of the ordinary political process of adjustment."<sup>21</sup> The Church does not have to deliberately call for political action with regard to a certain issue. The attitudes of the Church form part of the climate of opinion in which politicians operate, and reactions are often on an indirect pressure basis. As for the individual clergyman, if he is pastor to a flock which comprises the majority of a voting element in a city or district, he will automatically find that he shares political power with

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<sup>21</sup>Darrow, "The Church and Techniques of Political Action," p. 165.

the politicians simply by virtue of his position as interpreter of the commonweal.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, it should be made clear that the Church often refuses to cooperate with politicians who directly seek her support. It may be said that politicians try to use the Church for political ends more than the Church tries to use politicians for religious ends.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 164, 165.

<sup>23</sup>Darrow, "Catholic Political Power," p. 34.

## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND

Franklin Roosevelt came to the Presidency eminently suited to accept and appreciate the growing political maturity of American Catholics. His own religious convictions were amorphous enough to allow him a tolerance for doctrinal differences, yet formal enough to generate an appreciation for the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. Equally persuasive was his political experience with the Church in the state of New York as Senator, as supporter of Al Smith in 1928, and as Governor.

It is difficult enough to assess any man's personal religious convictions. When that man is as complex and as much of an enigma as Franklin Roosevelt, the task becomes especially foolhardy. We can easily set down the formal fact that Roosevelt was an Episcopalian, but what especially does this mean? He once admitted to Harold Ickes, his Secretary of the Interior, that this allegiance had developed primarily because his father had found it more convenient to attend the

Episcopal Church than a more remote Dutch Reformed Church. He boasted of being "low-church" and of preferring a Baptist sermon to that of an Episcopalian.<sup>1</sup> Yet he was very proud of his own wardenship in the Church. Furthermore, he liked to draw attention to the fact that one of his relatives was a prince of the Catholic Church. Archbishop James Roosevelt Bayley of Baltimore was a cousin and known as "Rosey" Bayley among the Roosevelts. FDR also boasted of his close personal relationship with James Cardinal Gibbons, another prince of the Catholic hierarchy.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to gauge Roosevelt's religious sincerity. He was a man who could insist that his Cabinet meet for prayer before assuming public office, who could look after the spiritual conversion of his own household staff, and who could contribute financially to his own and other churches in the Hyde Park area.<sup>3</sup> Yet he was also a man who could joke about the relative political strength of each

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<sup>1</sup>Harold Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold Ickes (3 vols.; New York, 1954), II, 290.

<sup>2</sup>Frank Freidel, "Roosevelt's Father," The Franklin D. Roosevelt Collector, V (November, 1952), 5.

<sup>3</sup>Grace Tully, F. D. R., My Boss (New York, 1949), pp. 112, 354; Frances Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew (New York, 1946), p. 140.

religious group and how to balance them. He once remarked to James Farley, his Postmaster General, that clergymen be appointed to a government committee on the basis of their total political strength.<sup>4</sup>

The answer to this seemingly paradoxical attitude toward religion may be found in FDR's personal theology and religious convictions. It seems clear that, theologically speaking, "in matters of the soul Mr. Roosevelt was a conservative."<sup>5</sup> He accepted the basic tenets of Christianity with the certitude of a fundamentalist. Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor during the New Deal, has written most perceptively on this side of Roosevelt. She points out that the major problems of Higher Criticism of the Bible and "scientific discoveries . . . bothered him not in the least."<sup>6</sup> It might be added that this lack of intellectual and theological background may have permitted FDR the flexibility and receptiveness to all faiths which made his presidency congenial to Catholics and others. Roosevelt

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<sup>4</sup>James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story, the Roosevelt Years (New York, 1948), p. 59.

<sup>5</sup>George N. Shuster, "Mr. Roosevelt," Commonweal, April 25, 1945, p. 38.

<sup>6</sup>Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew, p. 140.

himself gave some insight into his view on religion in a reply he made in March, 1935, to a query regarding the religious affiliation of his ancestors. "In the dim distant past," he said, "they may have been Jews or Catholics or Protestants. What I am more interested in is whether they were good citizens and believers in God. I hope they were both."<sup>7</sup>

Franklin Roosevelt's political awareness of the Catholic Church started early in his career. When, as a member of the State Senate of New York in 1911, he attempted to lead a revolt against Tammany control of the Democratic nomination to the United States Senate, he felt the barbs of the Catholic hierarchy. William F. Sheeham, the Tammany candidate, was an Irish Catholic. This, however, had little to do with Roosevelt's and the other Insurgent's opposition to him. They simply felt that he was not the best man for

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<sup>7</sup>Samuel Rosenman, ed., The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt (13 vols.; New York, 1938-1950), IV, 96. This democratic approach to religion, however, was not the only factor in FDR's receptiveness to the Catholic Church, but must be viewed with the rising political consciousness of the Church. Roosevelt's views on religion seem to fit a pattern brilliantly outlined in Herberg, Protestant, p. 75, where the author observes that Americans have become dedicated not to one religion but to the idea that religion itself is good for society and that the most popular religion is the "American Way of Life."

the job. Yet, Bishop Patrick A. Ludden of Syracuse, New York, condemned FDR and his friends as being motivated by "bigotry and the old spirit of Knownothingism."<sup>8</sup> Roosevelt quickly replied to this outburst, terming it "uncalled for, unnecessary and unfortunate." He denied that the controversy had any religious overtones and admonished that the Bishop did not know what he was talking about.<sup>9</sup>

It was, of course, during the 1928 presidential campaign that Roosevelt really became intimate with the problem of the Catholic Church's relationship to American public life. As an early and strenuous supporter of Al Smith, Roosevelt was squarely in the middle of the religious question. Before the campaign started, FDR did not think that Smith's Catholicism or his humble origins would hurt his chances for election.<sup>10</sup> When the religious issue did crop up during the campaign, Roosevelt gave Smith political advice on how to answer some of the more sophisticated

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<sup>8</sup>Vlastimil Kybal, "Senator Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1910-1913," The Franklin D. Roosevelt Collector, IV (November, 1951), 13.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>10</sup>Harold F. Gosnell, Champion Campaigner: Franklin D. Roosevelt (New York, 1952), p. 75.



Protestant charges.<sup>11</sup> Informally, Roosevelt combatted religious bigotry while vacationing at Warm Springs, Georgia, shortly before the election. Here he was astounded at how ignorant the Southern rural dweller was of Catholicism.<sup>12</sup> His private correspondence during this period (before 1928) was filled with letters answering charges that a Catholic should not be President.<sup>13</sup>

Roosevelt also took formal steps against the bigotry he saw developing in the campaign of 1928. Speaking at Binghamton, New York, on October 17, 1928, he made light of the issue by joking that some people were not opposed to Irish Catholics, only Roman Catholics.<sup>14</sup> Yet a few days later, on October 20, at Buffalo, New York, he spoke with an extremely serious tone on the question. Calling upon his experiences in Europe during World War I, he reminded his audience that no religious question was raised when American

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<sup>11</sup>Edmund A. Moore, A Catholic Runs for President: The Campaign of 1928 (New York, 1956), pp. 72-73.

<sup>12</sup>Eleanor Roosevelt, This I Remember (New York, 1949), p. 40.

<sup>13</sup>Bernard Bellush, "Apprenticeship for the Presidency: Franklin D. Roosevelt as Governor of New York" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia, 1950), II, 22.

<sup>14</sup>Rosenman, Public Papers, I, 20-21.

"doughboys" went to defend freedom, and those of all creeds died side by side. He hoped this great lesson would not be forgotten. But if any man could remember the war experiences and still "cast his ballot in the interest of intolerance and of a violation of the spirit of the Constitution of the U.S.," then, concluded Roosevelt, "I say solemnly to that man or woman, 'May God have mercy on your miserable soul!'"<sup>15</sup>

With the thought of presenting a formal complaint to a Congressional committee at some time in the future, Louis Howe, FDR's personal secretary, systematically collected letters and documents which contained bigoted information against Smith, traced them to their source, and prepared a substantial file of evidence. Howe was assisted by Roosevelt's private secretary Grace Tully, an Irish Catholic and former secretary to Patrick Cardinal Hayes of New York. This file was eventually forwarded to Washington but no use was ever made of it.<sup>16</sup>

Ironically, it seems that while Smith's Catholicism hurt his chances for the Presidency, at the same time FDR's defense of Smith and attacks on religious bigotry won for

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., I, 36-38.

<sup>16</sup>Grace Tully, FDR, p. 34; Eleanor Roosevelt, This I Remember, p. 40.

him the sympathy of many New York Catholics. While it is true that Louis Howe was worried because Roosevelt's defense of Smith and attacks on bigotry was being interpreted as attacks against Protestantism in general, it is also true that FDR received a plurality of 406,505 in New York City which was only 32,000 less than the Smith vote. This support in New York City, combined with some upstate backing, was enough to elect Roosevelt Governor, succeeding Smith.<sup>17</sup>

Roosevelt as Governor continued to receive the support of New York's Catholic element. One of the more outstanding instances where Catholics noted his favorable attitude was his signing of the Love-Hayes bill in 1932. This bill made it unlawful to inquire into the religious beliefs of anyone seeking a teaching position in the public schools. The bill had sprung from a complaint by a Catholic woman who said she had been discriminated against in applying for a teaching position because of her religion. All of the Catholic newspapers in the state had supported the bill in their editorials and rejoiced at FDR's favorable action.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Gosnell, Champion Campaigner, p. 90; Bellush, "Apprenticeship," III, 39. Needless to say, religion was not an issue in Roosevelt's campaign, but his defense of Smith certainly made him more attractive to New York Catholics.

<sup>18</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, March 26, 1932, p. 1.

In June, 1929, Roosevelt spoke at Fordham University, a Jesuit institution in New York City. In his address he praised those men and women who turned their backs on materialistic careers to devote their life to charity and the service of God. More important than FDR's theme, however, was the fact that when the Jesuit president of Fordham, upon giving Roosevelt an honorary degree, commented that here was a man who might someday be President, the ten thousand in attendance cheered enthusiastically. It seemed that some American Catholics could look upon the presidential candidacy of Franklin Roosevelt with favor, an attitude that his own understanding and sympathy for them had generated.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Frank B. Freidel, Franklin D. Roosevelt (3 vols.; Boston, 1952- ), III, 72. Thomas Corcoran noted that it was impossible for Roosevelt not to be aware of the Church because of his political roots in New York. Interview with author, July 15, 1965, Washington, D. C.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE

As the election year of 1932 dawned, it became clear that the Democrats had their best chance of winning the Presidency since Woodrow Wilson's triumph in 1916. This fact was probably the main reason for Al Smith's decision to contest the nomination with Roosevelt. This put the Roosevelt forces in the embarrassing position of courting the support of those sections of the country that had rejected Smith in 1928. The ensuing fight for the nomination produced a bitter reaction among many Eastern Catholics, and after the convention Roosevelt devoted a major effort to woo them back into the Democratic fold.

Catholic reaction to the news that Smith had decided to seek the nomination in 1932 was ambiguous. It was true that some Catholic political analysts felt that his entrance on the scene would stop the "Roosevelt Express," and that Smith had a good chance to win both the nomination and the

election.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Jim Farley had found spotty support for Smith in his tour of the country. Smith's strong showing in the Massachusetts and Pennsylvania primaries indicated that to many easterners he was still a hero. But Farley noted that the Smith sentiment "comes mostly from ardent Catholic admirers and in some instances from strong wet advocates."<sup>2</sup>

All Catholics were not in favor of Smith's running again in 1932. Father John A. Ryan, a leading Catholic social thinker throughout the 1930's, remembered the vicious bigotry of 1928 and was reluctant to do anything to revive this spirit.<sup>3</sup> The editor of The Catholic World, Reverend James Gillis, worried about the constitutional crisis which might result from another Smith campaign. After all, if Smith should be rejected again on the basis of his religion, the constitutional clause that no religious test be required

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<sup>1</sup>C. W. Thompson, "Today and Next November," Commonweal, June 1, 1932, p. 119; Extension, XXVII (June, 1932), 24-25.

<sup>2</sup>James A. Farley, Behind the Ballots (New York, 1938), p. 84; Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt, p. 7; J. Joseph Huthmacher, Massachusetts People and Politics, 1919-1933 (Cambridge, 1959), p. 237.

<sup>3</sup>Reverend John A. Ryan to Thomas R. Lynch, February 5, 1930, John A. Ryan Papers, Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C. The Ryan Papers are arranged chronologically by date of correspondence.

for office would prove meaningless. This editor did not feel the nation could stand another display like that of 1928. Yet on second thought he felt it might be better to clarify the issue once and for all.<sup>4</sup>

Another indication of the division of Catholic sentiment toward the Democratic nomination was the fact that a number of prominent Catholic laymen worked actively for Roosevelt. Frank P. Walsh, a well-known New York attorney and Catholic layman, supported FDR before and at the convention. Senator Thomas J. Walsh of Montana, later selected to be Roosevelt's Attorney General, also worked to secure the nomination for FDR at Chicago.<sup>5</sup> Irish Catholic politicians,

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<sup>4</sup>The Catholic World, CXXXIV (March, 1932), 734. A few years after the election, a story was published which indicated that the American hierarchy had not supported Smith in 1932. Seeking a reconciliation with American society, the Bishops were embarrassed by Smith's tendency to remind his audience of 1928. Indications were that Smith's preconvention campaign of 1932 was promoting and reviving the same atmosphere that had existed in 1928. The Bishops felt the time was not ripe for a Catholic President and that more harm than good would result from the attempt. This story, the authenticity of which is unsubstantiated, appeared in The Monitor of San Francisco, April 21, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Frank P. Walsh to Ewing Y. Mitchell, January 19, 1932, Box 134, Frank P. Walsh Papers, New York Public Library; Clipping of "National FDR League for President," Box 405, Thomas J. Walsh Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

such as Farley and Ed Flynn of the Bronx and James M. Curley of Boston, were also behind the Roosevelt machine. Colonel P. H. Callahan, a Kentucky businessman and influential Catholic layman, had urged Roosevelt to make the race long before 1932. Callahan was of the opinion that Smith had received a pro-Catholic vote in 1928 and had no cause to complain about the results.<sup>6</sup>

The Commonweal, a national Catholic magazine edited by laymen, pledged neutrality in the race for the Democratic nomination, but it could not refrain from speaking of Roosevelt as a man whose "strength may be said to lie in a happy blend of skill and knowledge." The editor also played up the Governor's great familiarity with the problems of agriculture and taxation.<sup>7</sup>

Yet it was also clear that Roosevelt was taking a calculated risk by basing his nomination on the support of the Southern wing of the party. Of course, he could do little else while Smith maintained the allegiance of the East. But when Roosevelt's antiprohibition speech of 1932 was accepted

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<sup>6</sup>FDR to Callahan, December 5, 1929, in F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, ed. Elliott Roosevelt (3 vols.; New York, 1947-1950), III, 93.

<sup>7</sup>Commonweal, May 4, 1932, p. 3.



without a protest in the South, the New York Times could editorialize that this proved the South's opposition to Smith in 1928 had been on religious grounds. "The same people who rejected a 'wet' Smith have now accepted a 'wet' Roosevelt, because the latter is not a Catholic."<sup>8</sup>

Roosevelt was soon labeled the candidate of the Southern bigots by certain Catholic sources, who pointed out that the anti-eastern wing of the party was behind him.<sup>9</sup> One of Smith's more reckless supporters even tried to document this accusation by forwarding to the delegates at Chicago copies of letters purporting to show that the Ku Klux Klan was supporting FDR in the South. F. B. Summers and C. W. Jones were named as two Klansmen who had solicited other Klansmen to support FDR in Georgia. Both Roosevelt and Farley dismissed these charges as ridiculous.<sup>10</sup>

These scattered attacks seemed to have little effect on the Governor's drive for the nomination. It was true that FDR was counting on the support of those elements in the Democratic party which had rejected Smith at the polls in

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<sup>8</sup>New York Times, February 23, 1932, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup>C. W. Thompson, "The New Portent at Chicago," Commonweal, July 13, 1932, p. 282.

<sup>10</sup>New York Times, June 21, 1932, p. 8.

1928. But this support did not require extensive proselytizing by FDR. Many southern delegates were antagonized by Smith's and by National Chairman Raskob's attempts to pre-commit the party to an antiprohibition stand before the convention met. Raskob's antiprohibition and high tariff philosophy pushed many southern conservatives into the Roosevelt camp.<sup>11</sup> It was also true that FDR had a reputation of tolerance among Catholics in New York, had defended Catholicism in 1928, and had considerable support from Irish Catholics in the East.<sup>12</sup> The Roosevelt forces could assume that the attitude of The Catholic World did not represent that of American Catholics:

. . . the Democratic party should show its hand. . . . If the democratic delegates reject Smith without giving some bona fide reason for his "unavailability," all the world will know that they have rejected him because of his religion. In that case the party writes itself down a coward and an enemy to religious liberty and it deserves all the beatings it has ever had or will ever get.<sup>13</sup>

During the convention, some of Roosevelt's advisers realized that something would have to be done to overcome

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<sup>11</sup>Frank Freidel, F. D. R. and the South (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1964), p. 30.

<sup>12</sup>Huthmacher, Massachusetts, pp. 230-39.

<sup>13</sup>The Catholic World, CXXXIV (March, 1932), 737.

the bitterness aroused among many eastern Catholics by the rejection of Smith. Furthermore, Roosevelt himself realized that although the South and West might give him the nomination, the big electoral votes of the East would be needed to win the Presidency. Ed Flynn, one of Roosevelt's closest friends, suggested that the vice-presidential nomination go to someone who would appease the northeastern Catholics. This proposal was rejected, and John Nance Garner, who was described by The Catholic Mirror as "a representative of perhaps bigotry's banner state," was picked because Roosevelt needed the Texas delegation for the nomination.<sup>14</sup>

Evidence of Catholic bitterness over the convention results mounted as the delegates left Chicago to return home. Members of the Massachusetts delegation were heard to mutter they would not vote for the "Klan candidate."<sup>15</sup> The Catholic press also gave indications of displeasure with the Roosevelt nomination. The Ave Maria, published at Notre Dame, said that William G. McAdoo deserved the boos he received from the Chicago galleries when he helped put Roosevelt across at

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<sup>14</sup>Oscar Handlin, Al Smith and His America, p. 166. See The Michigan Catholic, July 14, 1932, p. 4, for the suggestion that Senator Walsh of Montana be chosen as vice-presidential nominee.

<sup>15</sup>Huthmacher, Massachusetts, p. 239.

the convention.<sup>16</sup> The Chicago diocesan paper, The New World, wondered why the Democrats made "a concerted effort to shut out of the convention even mention of a Catholic candidate?" But then why bother, mused the editor, when they already have the Catholic vote "in their pocket"?<sup>17</sup> The Catholic Mirror of Springfield, Massachusetts, announced that bigotry was "a steamroller in 1932" and that the Democrats had less excuse for it than the Republicans. The party had denied Smith the nomination simply because of his religion and had compounded its offense by choosing as vice-presidential nominee a man from one of the most bigoted states in the Union.<sup>18</sup> The Italian News commented that the Democratic party of Al Smith had nothing in common with the forces which nominated Franklin Roosevelt in Chicago.<sup>19</sup>

The spirit of resentment building up in segments of the Catholic population was apparent to neutral observers. The New York Times editorialized on the bitterness and

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<sup>16</sup>Cited approvingly by The Michigan Catholic, July 28, 1932, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup>The New World, July 22, 1932, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup>New York Times, October 25, 1932, p. 10; Huthmacher, Massachusetts, p. 242.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

spirit of rebellion which was evident among Catholic voters of Connecticut and Massachusetts. Arthur Krock, noted political analyst for the paper, said, "Something will have to be done if FDR expects to carry Massachusetts this year."<sup>20</sup>

One of the most surprising manifestations of this Catholic bitterness was the development of a movement to vote for Norman Thomas, the Socialist candidate, as a protest. The movement first came to public attention when C. W. Thompson wrote an article for the Commonweal, in which he debated the propriety of a Catholic voting for Thomas. He concluded that since the Democrats were ruled by southern bigots, Catholics might well vote for Thomas "with a clear conscience." Thompson portrayed Thomas as a defender of religious liberty and no tool of Russia.<sup>21</sup> Anthony J. Beck, editor of The Michigan Catholic, wrote from Detroit that there was strong sentiment in that section of the country for Thomas from both laymen and clergy.<sup>22</sup> Father John Ryan,

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<sup>20</sup>New York Times, September 5, 1932, p. 10; October 25, 1932, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup>C. W. Thompson, "Will Catholics Vote for Thomas?" Commonweal, August 31, 1932, pp. 422-24.

<sup>22</sup>A. J. Beck to Rev. John A. Ryan, September 25, 1932, Ryan Papers.

when asked for advice, was reluctant to deny a Catholic's right to vote for Thomas or even to doubt the wisdom of doing so.<sup>23</sup>

An indication of the proportions of the Catholic movement for Thomas is the storm of opposition it called forth. Ryan's reluctance was not shared by other Catholic sources, who were quick to condemn what they saw as a dangerous movement. The editors of Commonweal could not even agree with the position taken by their contributor, C. W. Thompson. They pointed out that the Socialist offered "an all embracing philosophy which was entirely naturalistic." A vote for Thomas might not mean acceptance of socialism but it was a dangerous flirtation.<sup>24</sup> Another national Catholic magazine, America, published by the Jesuits, was even more vigorous in its opposition. The socialist view of the world was, it declared, totally alien to the Catholic view. Furthermore, Thomas was in favor of recognizing the Soviet Union, a move that should be strenuously opposed. The editor of America thought that Catholics

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<sup>23</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan to Rev. Francis J. Martin, February, 1933, Ryan Papers.

<sup>24</sup>Commonweal, September 7, 1932, pp. 437-38.

were forbidden to vote for Thomas "even in the phantom form of a 'protest vote.'"<sup>25</sup>

On a more local level, several diocesan papers came out against what they considered growing sympathy for Norman Thomas in their midst. The geographic locations of these papers give some indication that this was not an isolated movement. The Boston Pilot said that the great interest in Thomas exhibited by Catholics could only be an indication of "lack of enthusiasm" for either Roosevelt or Hoover. Yet the editor felt that a Socialist vote would be dangerous and unwise. The Denver Register commented that the mail it received indicated a growing preference for Thomas among its readers; the editor, however, felt that it would be best for his readers to vote for one of the major candidates, "especially in view of the stand taken by Alfred E. Smith, whose admirers were responsible for the letters about which we are writing." A vote for Thomas would be a wasted one. The Michigan Catholic, published in Detroit, admitted that a number of intelligent Catholics had expressed a desire to vote for Thomas, but the editor cautioned them against such

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<sup>25</sup>Rev. Gerard B. Donnelly, S.J., "Can Catholics Vote Socialist?" America, October 15, 1932, p. 32; America, September 10, 1932, p. 536.

a move. The Socialists had a cosmology, he explained, which would replace religion, and it would be dangerous to support them at the polls. The Catholic Messenger of Davenport, Iowa, was even more blunt about the matter: Socialists were anti-Christian, and a "vote for the Socialist ticket is a vote for the recognition and approval of the actions of the Russian Soviet."<sup>26</sup>

If the protest vote for Thomas was not enough to worry Democratic leaders, they also had to contend with Republican attempts to exploit the dissatisfaction of Catholic voters over the rejection of Smith. Paul Y. Anderson, writing in The Nation, August 3, 1932, suggested that Eastern Republicans were busy telling Smith supporters in New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts that FDR workers had used anti-Catholic propaganda in the South and West to gain the nomination over Smith. One Catholic editor observed that this campaign was not limited to the East and was proving surprisingly effective among Catholics.<sup>27</sup> Apparently the campaign was serious enough to cause Jim Farley to speak

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<sup>26</sup>The Boston Pilot, November 5, 1932, p. 4; The Denver Register, November 6, 1932, p. 1; The Michigan Catholic, September 29, 1932, p. 4; The Catholic Messenger, August 18, 1932, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup>Extension, XXVII (October, 1932), 23.



out against it before the State Democratic Convention of Rhode Island on October 7, 1932. He accused Republicans of reviving the religious issue with a new angle and pleaded with Catholics not to let Republicans put them in the same position as the bigots of 1928.<sup>28</sup>

The fact was that very few Catholic publications put stock in this attempt to label Roosevelt as anti-Catholic. Some called the evidence supporting the claim so meager that only an idiot would fall for it. Others resented the fact that the party which benefited most from bigotry four years ago would attempt to do so again, only this time in reverse. The attempt to use vice-presidential nominee Garner as a scapegoat for southern bigotry of 1928 was described as "detestable business." Finally, this campaign's assumption that Catholics voted for religious reasons was especially irksome to some Catholics.<sup>29</sup>

The actions of Al Smith were also important in cutting the ground out from under the attempts to deprive Roosevelt of Catholic support in 1932. Roosevelt realized that the

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<sup>28</sup>New York Times, October 8, 1932, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup>The Cleveland Universe Bulletin, September 1, 1932; Extension, XXVII (October, 1932), 23; The Catholic Transcript, August 18, 1932, p. 4; America, August 13, 1932, p. 439.

South and West could nominate him but that to be elected he would need the big electoral support of the East. And it was in the East that Smith had his most loyal supporters.<sup>30</sup> After the Chicago convention, Smith had mumbled something about being a party man but had done nothing publicly to support the ticket. Roosevelt's advisers, among them Felix Frankfurter, tried to promote a reconciliation between the two New Yorkers.<sup>31</sup> In August, vice-presidential candidate Garner visited Smith in New York. Their conversation was private, but in a speech immediately following the meeting Garner, "with tears in his eyes," took an apologetic attitude about the defection of Texas in 1928 and condemned religious bigotry in general. In the meantime, Senator David I. Walsh of Massachusetts, a close friend of Smith, was trying to persuade the ex-Governor to support FDR for the sake of the party. Whatever the consequences of these actions, Roosevelt and Smith did join forces to support the nomination of Herbert Lehman for Governor of New York. The newspapers

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<sup>30</sup>See Bellush, "Apprenticeship," II, 24, where it is noted that back in 1928 FDR had confided to a friend that failure to nominate Smith would cause great defections in the East from the Democratic party because of the "blind, hero-worshipping following" he had.

<sup>31</sup>FDR to Felix Frankfurter, September 14, 1932, in Personal Letters, III, 301.

carried pictures of them shaking hands. Such camaraderie was a source of elation to Farley and Howe. They felt it would eliminate the possibility of any Irish Catholic defection from the ticket in November.<sup>32</sup>

Smith campaigned for Roosevelt in the East. After the ex-Governor's first speech in Newark, New Jersey, some newspapermen complained because he brought up the religious issue of the 1928 campaign. But there was no question that the crowds still appreciated him. Although slow warming up, Smith eventually came around to full support for FDR.<sup>33</sup> The apogee of his efforts for the party was reached in Boston on October 27. There, speaking to fifteen thousand people, he closed his address with a remark interpreted as a rebuttal to the anti-Catholic rumors being used against Roosevelt. "There can be," Smith said, "no bigotry and there can be no resentment in the Catholic heart. It cannot be there."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Rexford G. Tugwell, The Democratic Roosevelt (New York, 1957), p. 245; Huthmacher, Massachusetts, pp. 241-42; Clipping of The Boston Advertiser, July 2, 1932, in Scrapbook No. 48, David I. Walsh Manuscripts, Holy Cross College, Worcester, Massachusetts; The Catholic Transcript, November 10, 1932, p. 4, in which the editor insists that it was Garner who won Smith over to campaign for FDR.

<sup>33</sup>New York Times, October 28, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup>Quoted by Huthmacher, Massachusetts, p. 248.

The New York Times called Smith's tour of Massachusetts a triumph and pointed out that "priests were in the forefront of every crowd eager to clasp his hand and state their approval of his speech."<sup>35</sup>

It is difficult to say how much effect Smith's efforts really had on Catholic voters. It seems clear that after Maine went Democratic in its mid-September election, most political professionals in the East saw a walk-away for Roosevelt in November, with or without Smith's help. In Massachusetts, after some initial hesitation, Senator David Walsh came out strongly for the ticket, and he seems to have played an important role in swinging the Bay State into the Democratic column.<sup>36</sup>

Yet it is also clear that Smith's support of Roosevelt was looked upon by some Catholic sources as a final benediction to the candidate. The Commonweal remarked in September that "the show is in jeopardy until Al Smith makes

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<sup>35</sup>New York Times, October 29, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup>Huthmacher, Massachusetts, p. 245; Clipping of Boston Advertiser, July 2, 1932, Scrapbook No. 48, David Walsh Papers; Jim Farley says Smith did help in the East but that the Roosevelt camp was not overly concerned with the possibility of Irish Catholics defecting, interview with author, March 20, 1965.

up his mind to join." The Michigan Catholic and The Catholic Herald felt that reconciliation of Smith and Roosevelt would deal a death blow to the whispering campaign which was attempting to exploit religious feeling.<sup>37</sup> Father John Ryan had been approached early in the campaign about endorsing Roosevelt and thereby undercutting the anti-Catholic campaign being waged in the East. Ryan was now told, by these same Catholic sources, that the issue was no longer in doubt because of the splendid reaction to Smith's New England campaign. John McHugh Stuart wrote that Smith's endeavor "makes doubly sure that we will have in the White House . . . a knowledgeable friend and intelligent champion of the social and economic doctrines recommended to us by Authority and experience."<sup>38</sup>

In spite of these indications, it appears certain that Roosevelt would have received considerable Catholic support regardless of the actions of Al Smith. FDR had a number of things working in his favor. First, there was a natural tendency to view Hoover as the man who had profited by the

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<sup>37</sup>The Michigan Catholic, October 13, 1932, p. 4; The Catholic Herald of Milwaukee, October 13, 1932, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup>John McHugh Stuart to Rev. John A. Ryan, October 29, 1932, Ryan Papers.

anti-Catholicism of 1928. Roosevelt, on the other hand, had defended Smith and presented a posture of tolerance in 1928. Furthermore, Roosevelt was intimate with many prominent Catholics; and two of his chief advisers, Farley and Flynn, were Catholics.<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps the most attractive thing Roosevelt did during the 1932 campaign, from the Church's point of view, was to quote from the Papal encyclical Quadragesimo Anno of Pius XI, in a speech at Detroit, October 2, 1932. Roosevelt called the encyclical "just as radical as I am," and "one of the greatest documents of modern times."<sup>40</sup> The fact that a

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<sup>39</sup>Gosnell, Champion Campaigner, p. 131; The New World, July 15, 1932, p. 1, reminded its public that Roosevelt was a distant relative of Mother Elizabeth Ann Seaton, foundress of the Sisters of Charity and a "distinguished figure in Catholic Church history in this country."

<sup>40</sup>Rosenman, Public Papers, I, 778. The section of the encyclical quoted is as follows: "It is patent in our days that not alone is wealth accumulated, but immense power and despotic economic domination are concentrated in the hands of a few, and that those few are frequently not the owners but only the trustees and directors of invested funds which they administer at their good pleasure. . . ."

"This accumulation of power, the characteristic note of the modern economic order, is a natural result of limitless free competition, which permits the survival of those only who are the strongest, which often means those who fight most relentlessly, who pay least heed to the dictates of conscience.

"This concentration of power has led to a threefold struggle for domination: First, there is the struggle for dictatorship in the economic sphere itself; then the fierce battle to acquire control of the government, so that its

presidential candidate had quoted approvingly from an encyclical by the Pope had an immediate effect on American Catholics. To one editor, this demonstrated that at last Catholic social teaching was having an effect in this country.<sup>41</sup> Another felt that Roosevelt could not be accused of radicalism by his opponents, since he was no more radical than the Pope.<sup>42</sup> To some, his actions, implying "endorsement of some fundamental principles of Christian social reform," required great courage. This public service would, suggested one editor, go down as the most important remark of the entire campaign. His condemnation of laissez-faire capitalism gave hope that perhaps here was a man really concerned with social justice.<sup>43</sup>

The obvious significance of FDR's Detroit remarks for American Catholics was seen by John M. Stuart, a politically active New Yorker and friend of Father John Ryan. Stuart

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resources and authority may be abused in the economic struggle, and finally, the clash between the Governments themselves."

<sup>41</sup>The Catholic Herald, December 15, 1932, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup>America, October 15, 1932, p. 31.

<sup>43</sup>The Michigan Catholic, October 6, 1932, p. 4; Commonweal, October 12, 1932, p. 545; Denver Catholic Register, November 20, 1932, p. 1.

wrote Ryan asking the priest to comment on the Detroit speech and promising to publicize his remarks in New England, "where I fear there is likely to be a recognizable defection of our people through tribal pride." Ryan had received a similar query from Reverend Bryan J. McEntegart of Omaha.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, Roosevelt himself had written Ryan asking that the priest give some professional advice to Raymond Moley to be used in the campaign. Despite this contact, Ryan had not at first viewed Roosevelt's candidacy with exuberance. The priest had preferred Newton Baker for the Democratic nomination. But by September he was writing the Honorable W. F. Connolly of Detroit, who had published an article on why Catholics should support Roosevelt, on how much he admired the latter's views. Ryan suggested they be given wide publicity by the Democratic National Committee.<sup>45</sup> Yet Ryan refused to help the Democratic cause directly by writing on the similarity of Roosevelt's views with the Papal encyclicals. The priest admitted that FDR was obviously familiar with the Catholic documents and had accepted "important parts of its

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<sup>44</sup>John M. Stuart to Ryan, October 3, 1932; Ryan to Stuart, October 5, 1932, Ryan Papers.

<sup>45</sup>Francis L. Broderick, The Right Reverend New Dealer: John A. Ryan (New York, 1963), p. 208; Father Ryan to W. F. Connolly, September 17, 1932, Ryan Papers.



[Quadragesimo Anno] philosophy." He also felt that Roosevelt's Commonwealth Club address in San Francisco was in harmony with Catholic teaching, but he did not wish to contribute an article on these conclusions. Instead, Stuart was sent copies of old articles by Ryan in which Hoover's policies were criticized.<sup>46</sup>

Ryan was not the only prominent Catholic who considered Roosevelt the best choice in 1932. Frank Murphy, Mayor of Detroit and later Attorney General, supported FDR long before the Chicago convention and worked actively for his nomination.<sup>47</sup> Frank P. Walsh of New York had been appointed by Governor Roosevelt to the New York Power Authority and had supported the Governor for the nomination in 1932.<sup>48</sup> The already famous radio priest of Detroit, Reverend Charles E. Coughlin, came out early in support of Roosevelt. On a visit to New York City with Frank Murphy in

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<sup>46</sup>Rev. John Ryan to John M. Stuart, October 13, 1932, and October 18, 1932, Ryan Papers.

<sup>47</sup>Richard D. Lunt, "The High Ministry of Government: The Political Career of Frank Murphy" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of New Mexico, 1962), p. 63.

<sup>48</sup>Frank P. Walsh to Lewis Howe, December 9, 1931, Box 134, F. P. Walsh Papers. Archbishop Glennon of Omaha had remarked that Walsh presented an "impressive speech" for FDR. William P. Harvey to Walsh, August, 1932, Box 134, F. P. Walsh Papers.

the spring of 1932, the priest offered his services to support FDR's theory of government.<sup>49</sup>

When the votes were finally counted in November, the fears of the Roosevelt camp seemed largely exaggerated. Franklin Roosevelt was the overwhelming victor. He received 27,821,857 votes to 15,761,841 for Hoover and carried forty-two states with 472 electoral votes. Of the seventy-seven northern counties with large Catholic populations, which Smith swung out of the Republican camp in 1928, the vast majority supported Roosevelt in 1932.<sup>50</sup> In Boston, Roosevelt did better among Irish and Italian voters than had Smith.<sup>51</sup>

The new President showed impressive strength in the twelve largest urban areas in the United States, areas with big Catholic populations. Among others, he carried Boston, Massachusetts; Cook County (Chicago), Illinois; Orleans Parish (New Orleans), Louisiana; Wayne County (Detroit), Michigan; St. Louis, Missouri; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and New

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<sup>49</sup>Freidel, Roosevelt, III, 285.

<sup>50</sup>Lubell, Future of American Politics, p. 37. Lubell also points out that fifty-seven of these counties remained Democratic in every presidential election from 1928 to 1948.

<sup>51</sup>Huthmacher, Massachusetts, pp. 250-51.

York City by impressive majorities.<sup>52</sup>

It seems clear that the vast majority of American Catholics supported FDR at the polls in 1932. The reason for this support is more elusive. One author attributes it to no more than "a reasonable expectation of future favors."<sup>53</sup> This interpretation seems inadequate. Clearly the crisis of the depression and the desire for change affected Catholics as it did most other Americans. Although there was much in Roosevelt's program that appealed to Catholic leaders, and the candidate himself was conscious of Catholic political strength, it seems impossible to isolate a "Catholic vote" in the Democratic mandate.

After the election, however, American Catholics went about interpreting the results in their own fashion. Some considered the entire campaign a disappointment and felt sure the depression would continue.<sup>54</sup> Others felt that FDR had proved himself during the campaign and that, while "is

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<sup>52</sup>Edgar E. Robinson, They Voted for Roosevelt (Stanford University, 1947), pp. 20, 82, 103, 110, 120, 130, 149, 180.

<sup>53</sup>Daniel F. Cleary, "Catholics and Politics," in Catholicism in America: A Series of Articles from the Commonweal (New York, 1954), p. 98.

<sup>54</sup>The Catholic Telegraph of Cincinnati, November 10, 1932, p. 4.

not so able a man as Alfred E. Smith, . . . he will unquestionably make a splendid President."<sup>55</sup> The name of Al Smith continued to appear in Catholic analyses of the election. One publication felt that Smith was solely responsible for Roosevelt's victory in New England.<sup>56</sup> Another theme put forth was that Roosevelt's victory was "poetic retribution" for Smith and American Catholics. As one editor expressed it, "Al Smith has had his day now."<sup>57</sup> While some Catholics praised the lack of religious bigotry in the campaign, others noted that the bigotry that did exist was directed against Roosevelt and Garner for their pro-Catholicism.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Denver Catholic Register, November 10, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup>The Monitor, December 10, 1932, p. 8, quotes favorably this opinion expressed by The Ave Maria.

<sup>57</sup>The Michigan Catholic, November 10, 1932, p. 4; America, November 19, 1932, p. 149.

<sup>58</sup>L. W. Shields, "Bigotry in the Last Election," America, December 3, 1932, p. 203; The Catholic World, CXVI (December, 1932), 365.

### CHAPTER III

#### CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT, 1932

When Franklin Roosevelt entered office in 1932, American Catholics had a social philosophy with which to interpret the measures of the New Deal. The state and content of this social thought was the cumulative result of three elements forged in the preceding fifteen years: the "Bishops Program for Social Reconstruction of 1919," the Papal encyclical Quadragesimo Anno of 1931, and the work of Church liberals such as John A. Ryan, Charles Coughlin, and Dorothy Day. It was these elements which Catholics drew upon when they faced the depression of the 1930's. This is not to say that Catholic priests and laymen had not been concerned with social problems before 1929. Rather, the depression acted as a catalyst to their views and they became bolder in espousing them.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Aaron Abell, "The Catholic Church and the American Social Question," in The Catholic Church in World Affairs, p. 396.

Before attributing too much importance to the depression and the New Deal as well-springs of Catholic social consciousness, we should recall that in the 19th century the Knights of Labor drew support from James Cardinal Gibbons. In 1906, Reverend John A. Ryan wrote a book calling for a "living wage." Furthermore, many other priests and organizations within the Church had taken radical social positions long before the great depression.<sup>2</sup>

In 1919, the bishops of the United States published a document which spelled out a program of "Social Reconstruction." The program was so radical that one prominent businessman wrote that socialism had found a home in the Catholic Church.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, the bishops called for minimum-wage laws and governmental intervention in the economy to crush monopolies. For labor they advocated unemployment, health, and old-age insurance and government recognition of labor's right to organize. Other measures that they sponsored included public housing developments, legal safeguards relating to women and child labor, and a

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<sup>2</sup>Edward Marciniak, "Catholics and Social Reform," in Catholicism in America, pp. 123-24.

<sup>3</sup>Reverend John Tracy Ellis, American Catholicism (Chicago, 1956), pp. 142-43.

share by labor in management and ownership.<sup>4</sup>

The impact of this document can be seen in retrospect. By 1945, John T. McNicholas, Archbishop of Cincinnati, was eulogizing Archbishop Schrembs, late Bishop of Cleveland, by stressing that the latter had signed the Bishops' Program of 1919. Archbishop McNicholas pointed out that of the twelve major proposals offered in 1919, all but one had become federal law.<sup>5</sup> A member of the Roosevelt administration, Solicitor General Robert H. Jackson, remarked in 1939 that

. . . liberal political thinking in America has been profoundly influenced by the "Bishops' Program of Social Reconstruction." . . . What suffering might have been spared to men had the voice of the Bishops been heeded by those who came to power in 1920 instead of having to wait for the disaster-born administration of 1933.<sup>6</sup>

Another document to which Catholics had reference during the depression and the New Deal was the Papal encyclical Quadragesimo Anno by Pope Pius XI, written in 1931.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Broderick, Right Reverend, pp. 104-106; Ellis, American Catholicism, p. 142.

<sup>5</sup>Ellis, American Catholicism, p. 143.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted in Shannon, American Irish, p. 326.

<sup>7</sup>The document's real title was "On Reconstructing the Social Order," and was a supplement to the famous encyclical Rerum novarum of Leo XIII (1891).

Because of the pivotal role that this document played in Catholic interpretation of the New Deal, an analysis of its major points is in order.

The general theme of the encyclical was a condemnation of laissez-faire capitalism. Pius XI reiterated certain thoughts in the earlier document by Leo XIII. Leo had rejected the old watch-dog concept of the state and had called on government to "put forth every effort so that through the entire scheme of laws and institutions . . . both public and individual well being may develop spontaneously out of the very structure and administration of the State."<sup>8</sup> He had also encouraged the organization of unions to protect the rights of the laborer. Pius reaffirmed these ideas, but he also developed new principles of his own. He began by distinguishing the "twofold character of ownership of goods." The right of private ownership he defended, but he distinguished this from the use of ownership, declaring that the latter should be manifested with due regard for the common good as defined by the State.<sup>9</sup> While denying the claims of

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<sup>8</sup>Quoted in Quadragesimo Anno (National Catholic Welfare Conference edition, 1942), p. 12, hereafter cited as Q. A.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-20.



both Manchester Liberal and Socialist, the Pope did agree that

. . . the riches that economic-social developments constantly increase ought to be so distributed among individual persons and classes that the common advantage of all . . . will be safeguarded.<sup>10</sup>

He called for a wage for labor sufficient to support both the worker and his family. "Opportunity to work [should] be provided to those who are able and willing to work."<sup>11</sup>

The Pope rejected capitalism as the answer to man's ills. He denied the value of unlimited and free economic competition because, in truth, a dictatorship had grown out of this system. "It is obvious that not only is wealth concentrated in our times, but an immense power and despotic economic dictatorship is consolidated in the hands of a few. . . ." Furthermore, these few did not really own the property but were only the "managing directors," who nevertheless were all but unlimited in their disposition of this power.

Free competition has destroyed itself; economic dictatorship has supplanted the free market; unbridled ambition for power has likewise succeeded greed for gain; all economic life has become

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

tragically hard, inexorable, and cruel.<sup>12</sup>

As a substitute for this jungle-like system, the Pope called for industrial partnership: the cooperation of both labor and capital in the formation of vocational guilds. Although broad in concept, this goal of vocational groupings was to be the criterion by which many Catholics estimated the worth of the New Deal.<sup>13</sup>

Whatever the source of their information, one thing is clear: by 1932 many American Catholics, both lay and clergy, were generally appalled at the economic situation which existed and were calling vigorously for radical reform of the economic and social structure of the country. This concern was reflected in a joint statement by the American hierarchy, published on November 12, 1931, under the auspices of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. The bishops expressed sympathy for those suffering from the depression, blamed unrestricted individualism for the economic dislocations, and offered detailed cures for the situation. For one thing, they called for the study and application of the Papal

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<sup>12</sup>Q. A., pp. 37-38.

<sup>13</sup>Aaron I. Abell, American Catholicism and Social Action: A Search for Social Justice, 1865-1950 (New York, 1960), p. 263.

encyclical Quadragesimo Anno by all elements of society. For another, they insisted that "the wealthy are obligated in conscience to contribute for the relief of those who suffer and the more so because the system under which they suffer has yielded wealth to others." Specifically this meant a living wage for labor and a more equal sharing of profits. The bishops also expressed their conviction that "federal and state appropriations for relief in some form will become necessary." They proposed a "joint conference" of labor, business, and the government to deal with the depression.<sup>14</sup>

The National Catholic Welfare Conference, which had sponsored the Bishops' remarks, was a ten-year old organization which had sprung from the National Catholic War Council. This latter group had been formed during World War I to enable the Catholic hierarchy to more effectively support the United States' involvement in the European conflict after 1917. In essence the group was a national council for Catholic affairs. It was directed by the bishops of the United States through a council which met frequently each year. Between meetings, the work of the NCWC was carried on by a permanent staff of priests and laymen. Located in

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<sup>14</sup>Raphael M. Huber, ed., Our Bishops Speak. . . , 1919-1951 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1952), pp. 194-96.

Washington, D. C., and influenced by such Catholic liberals as Reverend John A. Ryan and Reverend John J. Burke, the NCWC played a large role in the discussion of public affairs.<sup>15</sup>

One month after the Bishops issued their statement, other evidence appeared of growing Catholic dissatisfaction with Hoover's method for solving the depression. Father Ryan of Catholic University and the Social Action Department of NCWC made an appearance before a Senate Committee. As a first step in combating the depression, Father Ryan called for five billion dollars in federal public works to provide relief from unemployment.<sup>16</sup> In the meantime, Ryan's assistant in NCWC, Reverend Raymond A. McGowan, issued a joint statement with Reverend James Myers of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, and Rabbi Edward L. Israel of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Echoing the Bishops' statement, these men called for a more equal distribution of wealth and income. They deplored the practice of some businesses to cut wages during the economic crisis. "It is now time," read their statement, "that the

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<sup>15</sup>Daniel Callahan, The Mind of the Catholic Layman (New York, 1963), pp. 86-87; Broderick, Right Reverend, pp. 235-36. NCWC continues to be active today with headquarters on Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, D. C.

<sup>16</sup>The Catholic World, CXXXIV (December, 1931), 366.

engineering principle of planning . . . should be extended to the control of entire industries and of industry in general."<sup>17</sup>

Over and over, prominent Catholics were heard demanding more positive action by the Federal government in combating the depression. Father Charles Coughlin of Detroit called for a rejection of the idea that the state should interfere with its citizens as little as possible.<sup>18</sup>

Reverend Dr. Francis J. Haas, Director of the National Catholic Conference of Social Work, while addressing his students on July 1, 1932, in Philadelphia, called for an end to clichés such as "balanced budget" and "no dole." He suggested instead an emergency program of massive Federal spending and a high surtax on large incomes and inheritances.<sup>19</sup> In an Independence Day address to the American Legion of Washington, D. C., Reverend Edmund A. Walsh, vice-president of Georgetown University, called for a new concept

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<sup>17</sup>Quoted in The Catholic World, CXXIV (December, 1931), 623.

<sup>18</sup>Shannon, American Irish, p. 296, calls Coughlin "a path breaker and propagandist for the radicalism of the subsequent New Deal" and says the priest prepared Irish Catholics for an intellectual acceptance of the New Deal as being in the tradition of the Church.

<sup>19</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, July 9, 1932, p. 1.

of capital. He pointed out that the best way of preventing the advance of Communism in this country was to give the laborer a wage above his immediate worth to provide insurance against unemployment and old age. "The few people who control all the money in the country," said Walsh, "have a choice of giving up some of it or having the government conscript it, or [seeing] a mob rob them."<sup>20</sup> Reverend Joseph A. Cashen of Duluth, Minnesota, speaking on the radio under the sponsorship of the Federated Trades Assembly, March 4, 1932, called for "active, adequate, and effective intervention by the United States Government" to end unemployment and decentralize the wealth of the Nation.<sup>21</sup>

The 18th annual convention of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, held September 25 through 28 at Omaha, Nebraska, provided an opportunity for Catholics to speak out on the emergency facing the country. Very Reverend A. J. Muench of St. Francis, Wisconsin, rejected the rugged individualism concept of business and the laissez-faire philosophy of government. He called for a redistribution of wealth on a broader base. Furthermore, the Sherman Act needed

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<sup>20</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, July 16, 1932, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., March 12, 1932, p. 1.

revision, for "only on the basis of cooperation can rational planning of production and distribution be made a reality." Muench was quick to make clear that the planning he called for should come not from the state, but from the "industrial and trade units themselves."<sup>22</sup>

Catholic laymen at the conference also spoke out on the situation. Frank P. Walsh, chairman of the New York State Power Commission, said that the efforts of credit extension and public works being pursued by President Hoover were wholly inadequate to meet the demands of relief. War-time measures were called for, insisted Walsh. He also called for a rejection of the theories of the English classical economists with their iron laws and suggested a return to the guild system of the Middle Ages as a way out of the depression.<sup>23</sup>

James Fitzgerald, another layman at the conference and an official of the St. Vincent de Paul Society from Detroit, took this occasion to castigate Hoover's relief policies as inadequate. Fitzgerald felt that the assumption by Hoover

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<sup>22</sup>National Conference of Catholic Charities, Proceedings, 1932-1941 (9 vols.; Omaha, Nebraska, 1932-1941), 18th annual convention, 1932, p. 204, hereafter cited as NCCC Proceedings.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

that local initiative should be the major source of relief was erroneous. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation was supposed to provide funds in an emergency. In fact, Fitzgerald commented, few funds were being distributed. He felt the administration should realize that Federal relief funds were needed now and that "necessity knows no law."<sup>24</sup>

James F. Murphy of Detroit, president of the NCCC Omaha Conference, rejected the idea that "blind economic forces" were the cause of the depression. On the one hand he condemned the "ruthless free competition which ends inevitably in economic dictatorship," and the procrastination of the government in "mobilizing the resources of the nation for relief. . . ." Yet Murphy insisted that he was also against excessive centralization and bureaucracy of government.<sup>25</sup>

While the foregoing statements indicate that a growing segment of American Catholics advocated more radical measures in combating the depression, not all shared this feeling. Indeed, Father John Ryan had to admit that by the end of 1932 most of the Catholic clergy in America was still illiterate

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<sup>24</sup>NCCC Proceedings, 1932, pp. 28-33.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-6.



regarding economics.<sup>26</sup> Reverend M. DeMunnynck, writing in The Catholic Mind, stressed the fact that private ownership was "an indisputable natural right."<sup>27</sup> Another writer, Reverend Lewis Watt, also came to the defense of private property. While admitting that economic relations could not be left to "the free play of competition," Watt did not feel that abolishment of private property would help cure the depression. But he did feel that state action was "absolutely necessary."<sup>28</sup>

Among the Catholic hierarchy, the Archbishop of Cincinnati, John T. McNicholas, felt that one of the main causes of the depression was the reckless spending of the Federal government. He remarked that "probably the expenses of government administration could be reduced fifty per cent, if fads and frills were eliminated." He also called for an end to "useless bureaus and endless commissions."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Broderick, Right Reverend, p. 201.

<sup>27</sup>Rev. M. DeMunnynck, "Right of Private Ownership," The Catholic Mind, XXX (January 22, 1932), 40.

<sup>28</sup>Rev. Lewis Watt, S.J., "Economic Principles and Social Practice," The Catholic Mind, XXX (March 22, 1932), 124.

<sup>29</sup>Quoted by The Brooklyn Tablet, April 2, 1932, p. 1.

Some sort of low point in prophecy was reached by the Milwaukee Catholic Herald when, after the November election, the editor announced that any effort by the new administration "to launch the government upon new enterprises will run counter to the insistent demand for public economy." "The public," insisted the editor, "will not stand for more government spending."<sup>30</sup>

Most Catholic spokesmen took a more radical reading of the depression and of the action needed to combat it. In their interpretation they were influenced by the belief that the ideas expressed in the encyclical of Pius XI held the answer to the American dilemma. For example, the National Catholic Alumni Federation undertook the sponsorship of regional meetings to promote social justice. In New York City on November 20, 1932, a call went out for a crusade based on the encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI. The goals of these meetings were twofold: to educate American industrialists to the fact that "modern capitalism has already failed," and to promote the "embodiment of papal principles into the governmental framework of the nation." The three main speakers at the New York meeting were Reverend James M.

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<sup>30</sup>Milwaukee Catholic Herald, November 10, 1932, p. 4.

Gillis, editor of The Catholic World, Reverend Wilfrid Parsons, S.J., editor of America, and Reverend John A. Ryan. Father Gillis predicted a vast social upheaval in America if capitalism did not reform. Father Parsons condemned laissez-faire economics, and Father Ryan said American capitalism was committing suicide by stressing production over consumption.<sup>31</sup>

Father Ryan had been an early exponent of the idea that the papal encyclicals could help solve the economic crisis. He pointed out "that the public authorities are obliged to promote the welfare of the people by many kinds of positive measures" and that the state should care for the poor and provide relief. He condemned the Hoover administration for not recognizing these facts.<sup>32</sup> Ryan stressed the fact that national planning was advocated by Pope Pius XI and that individualism was "a blind alley."<sup>33</sup>

Father Parsons was another propagator of the encyclicals. He lamented how few American Catholics realized

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<sup>31</sup>New York Times, November 21, 1932, p. 19.

<sup>32</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan, "National Responsibility in the Present Crisis," The Catholic World, CXXXVI (November, 1932), 169.

<sup>33</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan, "After the Depression," Catholic Action, January, 1932, p. 5; also NCCC Proceedings, 1932, p. 20.

that the Pope had condemned concentration of wealth and rugged individualism--phrases that Parsons associated with the Hoover regime. The priest felt that the Pope's call for an abolition of antitrust laws and the rejection of the free competition philosophy behind such laws was especially timely for American consideration.<sup>34</sup> Parsons' magazine, America, had called the Democratic platform of 1932 "a hodge-podge of economic theory," and had boasted that only Pius XI was bold enough to go to the root of the depression--laissez-faire economics. The editors proudly remarked that "Pius XI remains the most radical in social economics among all the public men of our age."<sup>35</sup>

Other voices joined the chorus stressing the relevance of the Pope's encyclical to the depression. Mayor Frank Murphy of Detroit spoke before the International Federation of Catholic Alumni at a meeting in New York City in November, 1932. The Mayor chose the Papal encyclicals as his topic and emphasized their applicability to the current economic crisis.<sup>36</sup> The Catholic Central Verein of America, at its

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<sup>34</sup>Rev. Wilfrid Parsons, S.J., "The Pope and the Depression," The Catholic Mind, XXX (June 22, 1932), 244.

<sup>35</sup>America, July 9, 1932, pp. 320-21.

<sup>36</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, November 26, 1932, p. 1.

77th general convention in St. Louis, August 19-24, 1932, passed a resolution calling for the reconstruction of society along the lines of vocational groups as laid down by Quadragesimo Anno.<sup>37</sup>

Another theme in the growing Catholic demand for economic reform was a bitter criticism of American capitalism. Already some of this has been made evident in the remarks of Ryan and Parsons. Catholic editors soon joined in this criticism. One editor said that if the depression proved anything, it proved "that the enormously wealthy men of the world are not its wise men."<sup>38</sup> Father Gillis used the editorial pages of The Catholic World to publicly disassociate the Catholic Church from capitalism, although he admitted the right of private property. Gillis felt that the depression should certainly make clear to all that "injustices" and "mad incongruities" were "inherent in the capitalistic system." To dismiss all attempts at reform as "communistic" was folly and revealed an inordinate fear complex.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>The Central-Blatt and Social Justice Review (Official Journal of the Catholic Central Verein), September, 1932, pp. 173-75.

<sup>38</sup>Denver Catholic Register, August 14, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup>The Catholic World, CXXXIII (May, 1931), 231-32; (July, 1931), 487-88.

The speakers at the Catholic Alumni Federation meeting of 1932 took the occasion to attack American capitalism. Father Gillis continued his criticism and accepted the fact that a social revolution was beginning in the United States. His only question was how much violence would accompany the revolution. According to Gillis, capitalists had treated labor "worse than . . . an animal." Father Parsons pointed out that the existing economic structure "actually has produced nothing but unlimited competition and unlimited opportunity for avarice and greed." Father Ryan remarked that capitalism had committed suicide by its narrow policies. He branded the attempt to blame the depression on the normal cycles of business as a delusion. Joseph A. Porcelli of Fordham University took the opportunity to call for laws to force industrialists to practice social justice.<sup>40</sup>

During the early 1930's Catholics were offered more than one forum for expressing their social views. In Detroit, Father Coughlin was developing the base for his Union for Social Justice with an emphasis on Federal control of finance. For those who found the program of Father Coughlin either too vague or too hysterical, there was the

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<sup>40</sup>"A Warning to Capitalist," 1932 clipping in Ryan Papers; The Catholic World, CXXXVI (December, 1932), 367.

Catholic League for Social Justice. This group was the outcome of a meeting early in 1932 of Catholic teachers, industrialists, and economists, held under the auspices of the National Catholic Convert's League, to study the depression. It was announced at the meeting that the Calvert Associates, publishers of Commonweal, were forming a League of Social Justice to promote the "study and application of the teachings of Pius XI." The leading spirit in this movement was Michael O'Shaughnessy, an oil executive and journalist. In October, 1932, the League received the endorsement of Cardinal Hayes of New York.<sup>41</sup>

O'Shaughnessy set the tone and goals of the new organization soon after he began publication of the Social Justice Bulletin, the League's official monthly organ. He outlined a plan to bring the United States out of the depression. O'Shaughnessy envisioned the formation of trade associations of all industrial units, which would provide health and accident insurance for members. These associations would also work for stabilization of production and prices. All trade associations would be under a directorate composed of management, labor, and the consumer. A government

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<sup>41</sup>Abell, American Catholicism, p. 242.

tribunal would be set up to decide labor-management disputes and would have veto power over the directorate.<sup>42</sup>

It is impossible to estimate the influence of O'Shaughnessy and his group. They were small in number and had little publicity. It is known that his plan was circulated among the members of Roosevelt's new cabinet. Furthermore, the National Catholic Alumni Federation adopted some of O'Shaughnessy's ideas and during the 1930's called for trade associations as a means of promoting economic stability.<sup>43</sup>

After Roosevelt's victory in November, 1932, Catholics became still more radical in their approach to the economic crisis. Father John Ryan wrote Raymond Moley that things were looking up because Hoover was getting out. He expressed hope that Roosevelt would be what he appeared--a man who knew the importance of restoring the purchasing power of the people and who would concentrate on redistribution rather than expansion of production.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, Richard Dana

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 245, 246.

<sup>43</sup>Abell, American Catholicism, p. 245; The Brooklyn Tablet, February 20, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan to Raymond Moley, November 29, 1932, Ryan Papers.



Skinner, associate editor of Commonweal, addressed the Knights of Columbus in New York and said that antitrust laws must be repealed because they promoted ruthless competition, a prime cause of the depression.<sup>45</sup>

Father Frederick Siedenburg, S.J., Dean of Detroit University, gave a presidential address before the Illinois Conference of Social Work in which he called for an "economy of abundance" to replace the "economy of scarcity" under which the United States was now operating. The common good must replace the selfishness of the capitalist. Socialization of production and distribution should come about by evolution rather than revolution. Old age insurance, minimum wage laws, and workmen's compensation were only a few things needed. Siedenburg concluded, in a tone which was shared by many American Catholics, that ". . . if need be, the Government must pour out its billions for relief and for Government work."<sup>46</sup>

By early 1933, it appeared that a large segment of American Catholics were favorably disposed toward the vigorous type of leadership Roosevelt would soon offer them.

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<sup>45</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, December 10, 1932, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup>Quoted in NCWC News Service, Urbana, Illinois, December 5, 1932; The Brooklyn Tablet, December 10, 1932, p. 1.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NEW DEAL AS CATHOLIC TEACHING

As the character of the New Deal unfolded during 1933, it met enthusiastic response from many American Catholics. On a more general and superficial level this support seemed to be generated because Catholic spokesmen and the Catholic press presented the reform legislation of the New Deal as being based on, and embodying, Catholic social teaching, in particular the ideas of the Papal encyclicals. Such being the case, Catholics were urged to give their wholehearted support to Roosevelt's policies.

During 1933, the Catholic press constantly presented the New Deal as an American version of the Papal encyclicals. This campaign began with an interpretation of Roosevelt's inaugural address. As one editor remarked, the great similarity of FDR's speech to Quadragesimo Anno made it clear that "the new President has really grasped the spirit of that document." His program "is merely a practical application of

the Papal principles for social reconstruction."<sup>1</sup> Both the Pope and the President assigned blame for the present crisis to the same cause--the unscrupulous practices of business.<sup>2</sup> The Catholic Times of London even went so far as to arrange the remarks of President Roosevelt and Pope Pius XI in parallel columns, to demonstrate that both men condemned capitalism. The similarities, felt the author, showed that FDR had not merely quoted the Papal encyclical in the campaign as would a shallow politician, but had done so as a sincere student of its principles. He concluded: "the Roosevelt plan of social reconstruction is the Catholic plan."<sup>3</sup>

After Roosevelt had been in office for one month, a few Catholic editors felt that their first impressions of the President had been confirmed. The goals of Leo XIII and Pius XI were being sought by business, labor, and the government. "The close similarity [of the New Deal] to the recommendations of Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI" was, wrote a

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<sup>1</sup>Denver Catholic Register, March 12, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>The Catholic World, CXXXVII (April, 1933), 107.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted by The Catholic Herald, March 30, 1933, p. 4; Denver Catholic Register, March 23, 1933, p. 4.

Cincinnati newspaper, especially apparent in the call for the abolition of child labor, and for the establishment of minimum hours and wages for labor.<sup>4</sup> This similarity called for enthusiastic support of the President's program by American Catholics. "The New Deal," claimed a Milwaukee paper, embodied "principles for which Catholic leaders have been making propaganda for years, principles set forth in Papal encyclicals. . . ."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the Christian social justice which seemed to be behind the New Deal could only be traced to the encyclicals of the Popes. The recognition by FDR that labor deserved more consideration in our society was rooted in Papal thinking.<sup>6</sup>

Some prominent Catholic sources even insisted that without the groundwork laid by the Catholic Church, the New Deal would not have been received so well by the people. Commenting on a speech by Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes, in which he rejected rugged individualism, one editor

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<sup>4</sup>The Catholic Herald, April 20, 1933, p. 4; The Brooklyn Tablet, April 22, 1933, p. 3; Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph, July 27, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>The Catholic Herald, July 27, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, July 29, 1933, p. 1; America, August 5, 1933, p. 411; The Michigan Catholic, August 3, 1933, p. 4.

remarked that "the seed sown by Leo XIII is beginning to grow into a mighty tree."<sup>7</sup> Reverend A. J. Hogan, S.J., President of Fordham University, felt that Catholic social thinking had made for "the ready acceptance of the New Deal." He thought it obvious that the administration was familiar with the Papal plan. Such men as Father John Ryan, Michael O'Shaughnessy, and Father Charles Coughlin, said Hogan, had "prepared the way for acceptance of the New Deal by Catholics" by familiarizing them with the Papal encyclicals.<sup>8</sup> Reverend John F. O'Hara, Vice-President of Notre Dame University, echoed the sentiments expressed by Father Hogan. O'Hara, too, felt that FDR was expounding the social teaching of the Church. Speaking to the Knights of Columbus in Waterbury, Connecticut, Father O'Hara remarked that President Roosevelt "discovered Catholic economics for us," and that he had used the encyclicals constantly. The priest speculated that perhaps some rich Catholics would now finally learn from the President of the United States the Church's teaching on wealth.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>America, November 18, 1933, pp. 146-47.

<sup>8</sup>NCCC Proceedings, October 1-4, 1933, pp. 50-52.

<sup>9</sup>NCWC News Service, January 22, 1934; Father John Ryan to Father George M. Sanvage, January 29, 1934, Ryan Papers.

Leaders of Catholic lay organizations contributed their support to the thesis that the New Deal was based on Catholic teaching. Edmond B. Butler, President of the National Catholic Alumni Federation, wrote a letter to the heads of alumni groups of Catholic colleges in the United States, urging them to support the New Deal. The reason why they should support the program was obvious. "The principles for which we have argued," wrote Butler, "and which were laid down for us in the encyclicals, Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno, seem for the first time in the history of our country, to be guiding the National Administration during this formative period." Catholics must ensure the success of this experiment. Indeed, "it is the duty of every educated Catholic . . . to take an active part," argued Butler.<sup>10</sup> He was supported in this line of reasoning by William J. McGinley, Supreme Secretary of the Knights of Columbus. McGinley was received by Pope Pius XI in Rome in October, 1933. Upon leaving the Papal apartments, the Knight expressed the thesis that President Roosevelt was being inspired in his deeds by Christian teaching, foremost of

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<sup>10</sup>NCWC News Service, July 17, 1933; New York Times, July 14, 1933, p. 8.

which was the encyclical of Pius XI.<sup>11</sup>

The views of Butler and McGinley found support in the statements of the American hierarchy. The Most Reverend John Mark Gannon, Bishop of Erie, Pennsylvania, urged the Catholic Daughters of America, at their convention in Colorado Springs, to help President Roosevelt put through his program. The Bishop felt that the President was "thoroughly acquainted with the principles laid down by our Holy Father in his many encyclicals." Furthermore, the President was "attempting to follow these principles in the New Deal." In fact, the New Deal was the Papal program in practice.<sup>12</sup> Another bishop, Most Reverend Edmond Heelan of Sioux City, Iowa, wrote the priests of his diocese that they should find a certain satisfaction in the fact that President Roosevelt was using the Papal teachings as the basis of his program of recovery. Bishops John A. Duffy of Syracuse, New York, and Michael J. Gallagher of Detroit, Michigan, were two more members of the hierarchy who praised Roosevelt's program and felt that it was based on the encyclicals. Gallagher

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<sup>11</sup>NCWC News Service, October 6, 1933; the editorials of the NCWC, carried over their News Service, also reiterated this theme, see April 17, 1933.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., "News Letter," July 10, 1933.

even went so far as to say that Catholics had "a solemn obligation" to support the New Deal.<sup>13</sup>

The question naturally arises as to how much of this comment was simply wishful thinking on the part of American Catholics. Were they simply projecting their desires or was there solid evidence that the New Deal embodied ideas similar to those of the Church? An answer to these questions can only come from a detailed analysis of the major pieces of New Deal legislation. Preceding such an analysis, however, it might be well to make a few preliminary remarks on the administration's familiarity with the Papal encyclicals.

Evidence does exist which demonstrates that Roosevelt was familiar with the Church's social program. During the campaign of 1932, he had quoted from Quadragesimo Anno. Furthermore, he had received a letter from R. Dana Skinner of New York, with whom he appears to have been on a first-name basis, in which Skinner commented on the wisdom of quoting from the Papal document. Skinner sent FDR an article on Quadragesimo Anno by Father Wilfrid Parsons, and suggested that a study of it be made as a basis for social action against the depression. Roosevelt replied by

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<sup>13</sup>NCWC News Service, February 19, 1934; The Brooklyn Tablet, August 19, 1933, p. 2.



referring Skinner to brain truster Raymond Moley, but admitted that he was interested in the ideas projected by the encyclical.<sup>14</sup> After the election, Skinner wrote to the President-elect again on the subject of the encyclicals. This time he spoke of winning Catholics' support to the "industries control idea" by convincing them that FDR's program was identical with the plan of Pope Pius XI. This was a tempting suggestion, but there is no evidence that Roosevelt personally pursued such a policy.<sup>15</sup>

There are other signs that Roosevelt was at least cognizant of the message of the encyclical. Reverend Charles Coughlin boasted in the pages of The Catholic Universe Bulletin of Cleveland, that he had "sat down with Mr. Roosevelt and read the encyclical over to him page by page."<sup>16</sup> Michael O'Shaughnessy, founder of the Catholic League for Social Justice, received a letter from Henry

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<sup>14</sup>Richard Dana Skinner to FDR, August 3, 1932, and FDR to Skinner, December 27, 1932, President's Personal File, Box 229, The Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Hyde Park, N. Y.

<sup>15</sup>Richard Dana Skinner to Louis Howe, June 13, 1933, Official File, 76-B, Box 4, Roosevelt Papers. Thomas Corcoran says that members of the administration were all aware of the encyclical, interview with author, July 15, 1965.

<sup>16</sup>Quoted in NCWC News Service, August 14, 1933.

Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture, in which the latter spoke of having read Quadragesimo Anno and of being very impressed with it. Wallace said that he had discussed the encyclical with others in the administration.<sup>17</sup> The editor of America, Father Wilfrid Parsons, wrote of also having discussed Quadragesimo Anno with President Roosevelt. At the time, according to Parsons, Roosevelt had said that the encyclical was "too radical for him."<sup>18</sup> Donald Richberg, legal counsel of the National Reconstruction Administration in 1932, had also made a study of the program outlined by Pius XI.<sup>19</sup>

On a number of occasions, members of the President's official family publicly associated the New Deal with the Papal encyclicals. Henry Wallace was the most prominent and persistent exponent of the idea that Roosevelt was only putting into practice the age-old social ideas of the Church.<sup>20</sup> In a speech before the World Alliance for

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<sup>17</sup>America, July 1, 1933, p. 292. Wallace admitted a familiarity with the encyclical in a letter to the author, January 23, 1964.

<sup>18</sup>America, June 2, 1934, pp. 174-76.

<sup>19</sup>Leo J. Hassenauer to Rev. John A. Ryan, April 11, 1934, Ryan Papers. Hassenauer was a business associate of Richberg's.

<sup>20</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, June 2, 1934, p. 10.

International Friendship in New York City, in 1934, Wallace made a point of the identity between the New Deal's attempt to balance agricultural and industrial prices and the ideas expressed by Pius XI.<sup>21</sup> The Secretary reiterated this theme in a speech to the National Conference of Catholic Charities in Cincinnati, October, 1934. He remarked that the New Dealers "are traversing ground in detail which has been described in more general terms in certain of the Papal encyclicals."<sup>22</sup>

Despite all this public notice and comment, not all American Catholics subscribed to the idea that the New Deal was merely the Papal encyclicals in native terms. It was pointed out that the New Deal was the program of one political party, but that the Church could never be found on only one side of the political fence. Furthermore, before anyone committed the Church to an endorsement of the New Deal, it should be considered that Roosevelt's plans may very well fail. Where, suggested some observers, would this leave the Church?<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, December 15, 1934, p. 3; The Monitor, December 22, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup>NCCC Proceedings, October 7-10, 1934, p. 66.

<sup>23</sup>The Monitor, May 5, 1934, p. 1.

The most persistent and sophisticated critic of the New Deal encyclical analogy was F. P. Kenkel, editor of Central-Blatt and Social Justice, the official journal of the Catholic Central Verein. Kenkel pointed out that the resemblance of the New Deal to the Pope's plan was "only superficial." Both plans called for control of industry, but the question of how this was to be executed, and who was to exercise control, remained unclear in the encyclical. Furthermore, the Pope called for self-government by the economic groups and rejected over-centralization. These concepts hardly seemed to be reflected in the National Industrial Recovery Act. Kenkel also felt that the New Deal and the Pope had different ideas on the protection of the consumer, with the former being little concerned with this aspect of the economic problem. These reflections led Kenkel to conclude that the tendencies in the New Deal were leading, not to the Christian utopia of the encyclical, but to "the bitter end of State Socialism."<sup>24</sup> It must be said, however, that Kenkel's views were those of a decided minority of Catholic editors in 1933.

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<sup>24</sup>Central-Blatt and Social Justice, XXVI (June, 1933), 80-81; and XXVIII (June, 1935), 78.

## CHAPTER V

### CATHOLIC REACTION TO ROOSEVELT, 1933

During 1933 there was a spirit of cooperation and support exhibited by American Catholics for the New Deal which went beyond platitudes on the supposed similarity of the movement with the teaching of the Church. Priests and laymen appraised the President and his program and found both praiseworthy. On his part, Roosevelt demonstrated an acute awareness of his Catholic backers and managed to solidify this support through his cordial relationship with the American hierarchy, his availability to the Church, and his patronage policies.

Significant elements of the American Catholic hierarchy welcomed Roosevelt's ascent to office in glowing terms, and before he even had an opportunity to merit such praise. William Cardinal O'Connell of Boston, dean of the hierarchy, praised the President in a speech to the local St. Vincent de Paul Society in April, 1933. After remarking on the great intelligence and deep religious outlook of Roosevelt, the

Cardinal asked his congregation to pray for their new leader. Afterwards, at a public news conference, O'Connell called FDR a "God-sent" man who was willing to sacrifice all for the good of the country. By November, 1933, the Cardinal was writing of the "wonderful degree of success" Roosevelt had achieved in restoring confidence to the American people.<sup>1</sup>

Patrick Cardinal Hayes of New York was an old acquaintance of the new President. Before the inaugural the Cardinal had dined with the Roosevelts as a guest of James Farley and had discussed the problems of Mexican Catholicism, the spread of communism, and the independence of the Philippines. After the inauguration Hayes spoke glowingly of FDR as "crystallizing the sentiments of the country in meeting the grave problems [of the depression]." Roosevelt's radio address on the banking crisis left the Cardinal deeply "moved."<sup>2</sup> The following year, Hayes, speaking at the Manhattan College Commencement in James Farley's honor,

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<sup>1</sup>William Cardinal O'Connell, Recollections of Seventy Years (Boston, 1934), p. 370; The Boston Pilot, May 6, 1933, p. 1; The Brooklyn Tablet, April 8, 1933, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>James Farley, Jim Farley's Story, p. 34; New York Times, March 22, 1933, p. 19; Farley says that Hayes also probably wanted to reassure the President on the Church's cooperation, even though Smith had lost out. Interview with author, March 20, 1965, Washington, D. C.

lauded the work of the Postmaster General and praised the President for his "spirit" and "vision." The Cardinal concluded that "we ought to rejoice that everything he [Roosevelt] tries to do . . . will come to a happy success."<sup>3</sup>

George Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago, one of the few American bishops with the "red hat," was an early and enthusiastic supporter of Roosevelt. The President made contact with Mundelein in characteristic fashion. Senator David I. Walsh of Massachusetts had remarked to Roosevelt that Mundelein was an avid autograph hunter and would greatly prize adding the President's to his collection. Roosevelt took the occasion of the Cardinal's feast day to send him a short note of congratulations. Mundelein was truly touched by this bit of thoughtfulness by "the busiest man in the land" and called the note "the finest gift I could possibly receive." He requested a private visit with the President to pay his respects for the fine achievements already made during FDR's first month in office.<sup>4</sup> The

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<sup>3</sup>New York Times, June 13, 1934, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup>FDR to George Cardinal Mundelein, April 22, 1933, and Mundelein to FDR, April 26, 1933, Selected Materials from the Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt Concerning Roman Catholic Church Matters, microfilmed at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, N.Y., June, 1955, 3 reels, Louisiana State University; hereafter cited as Sel. Mat.

Catholic press duly reported the fact that the Cardinal did visit the White House in May.<sup>5</sup>

Cardinal Mundelein's role as an apologist for the New Deal was to expand throughout the 1930's, and he came to play an important role in soliciting support for the international diplomacy of Roosevelt before World War II. In 1933, however, the Cardinal concentrated upon urging cooperation with the President's domestic program. In an address delivered before the Chicago Council of Catholic Women on October 12, 1933, the Cardinal praised FDR for showing "more friendly sympathy to the Church and its institutions than any occupant of the White House in half a century."<sup>6</sup> This type of sentiment seemed to be shared by the Vatican. Bishop J. M. Gannon of Erie, Pennsylvania, reported that in a private conversation the Pope had expressed to him high praise for President Roosevelt and his deeds.<sup>7</sup>

Archbishop Edward J. Hanna of San Francisco, chairman

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<sup>5</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, May 20, 1933, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted in NCWC News Service, October 13, 1933; see also The Brooklyn Tablet, October 21, 1933, p. 4; Rosenman, Public Papers, II, 22-23. Thomas Corcoran admitted being a courier from FDR to Mundelein in the period preceding World War II, Interview with author, July 15, 1965, Washington, D.C.

<sup>7</sup>New York Times, August 12, 1933, p. 12.



of the Bishops' Administrative Committee of the NCWC found great satisfaction in the spiritual tone of Roosevelt's inaugural address. Speaking for the Catholic hierarchy of the United States, Bishop Hanna proclaimed Catholic support for the President's recovery efforts.<sup>8</sup> Roosevelt acknowledged the statement by Hanna, which had been forwarded to the White House through Reverend Michael J. Ready of NCWC, and thanked the Bishop for his sentiments of support.<sup>9</sup>

To Bishop Karl J. Alter of Toledo, Ohio, Roosevelt's inaugural address was "one of the great moments in American history." Not only did the Bishop agree with Roosevelt's interpretation of the causes of the depression--namely the moral corruptness of industrialists--but he found much to praise in the President's "moral tone." According to this Bishop, Roosevelt's statement "breathes the spirit of Our Holy Father's recent encyclical 'Quadragesimo Anno.'" This, said the Bishop, augured the acceptance by America of Catholic social teaching.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Clipping of The Echo (Buffalo, New York), [n.d.] in Reel 3, Sel. Mat.; Colonel P. H. Callahan to Louis Howe, March 20, 1933, Reel 2, Sel. Mat.

<sup>9</sup>Catholic Action, April, 1933, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup>Printed statement of Bishop Karl J. Alter, March 7, 1933, Toledo, Ohio, in Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

In September, 1933, over the national facilities of the Columbia Broadcasting System, American Catholics heard Bishop Bernard J. Mahoney of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, praise the New Deal. The Bishop, pointing to Roosevelt's preinaugural visit to Church with his cabinet, concluded that "Christ will not fail one who made such a conspicuous profession of faith. . . ." <sup>11</sup> At the same time, the Most Reverend William A. Hickey, Bishop of Providence, Rhode Island, told the Catholics of his diocese to help the New Deal. He added: "I have been profoundly impressed with the evidence of God's hand in the unfolding and execution of our President's economic program." The Bishop gladly offered whatever influence he had to solicit support for the administration because its policies were "absolutely in harmony with the best economic and religious and patriotic principles." <sup>12</sup>

William Cardinal Dougherty of Philadelphia, late in 1933, also had occasion to express his regard for President Roosevelt. Dougherty's sentiments, however, grew more out of concrete political matters than from general principles.

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<sup>11</sup>Quoted in NCWC News Service, Chicago, September 11, 1933.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted in NCWC News Service, Providence, Rhode Island, September 8, 1933.

The Cardinal was concerned over what he considered a discriminatory clause in the administration's new revenue act. The bill would, according to the Cardinal, single out certain religious congregations for taxation. He wrote Roosevelt of his displeasure and warned that "Catholics will resent" such a clause. FDR replied by suggesting that Dougherty forward his objections to the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee of the House. The objectionable clause was eventually eliminated and the Cardinal attributed this to FDR's intervention.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the United States, the hierarchy commented favorably on the new President. Archbishop McNicholas of Cincinnati called upon his parishioners to pray for Roosevelt. Archbishop Michael J. Curley of Baltimore said the people were looking forward to the New Deal. Bishop Henry P. Robiman of Davenport, Iowa, commenting on his visit with Pope Pius XI, said that the Pontiff had praised the President's efforts on behalf of the poor and unemployed in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>William Cardinal Dougherty to FDR, telegram, December 23, 1933; FDR to Dougherty, January 11, 1934; Dougherty to FDR, March 2, 1934, Official File, 137-A Income Taxes, Box 19, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>14</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, March 11, 1933, p. 1; March 16, 1933, p. 8; The Catholic Herald, April 3, 1934, p. 1.

Various elements of the Catholic population reiterated the hierarchy's support for President Roosevelt. Reverend John A. Ryan remarked that the actions of FDR were "epochal," and that the inaugural address was inspiring.<sup>15</sup> Reverend Wilfrid Parsons, editor of America, wrote that President Roosevelt was pursuing a noble goal in trying to convince business to organize for the common good.<sup>16</sup> Reverend James I. Corrigan, speaking on the Boston radio network, said that FDR's prayers had been heard and that "we are well on our way to national recovery."<sup>17</sup> William C. Murphy, writing in Commonweal, pictured Roosevelt as a conservative politician. Rather than being the image-breaker pictured by his enemies, the President was fighting to prove the ability of democracy to face "any emergency."<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the highest individual tribute to President Roosevelt was rendered by the Most Reverend W. D. O'Brien, who pointed out that the United

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<sup>15</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan, Social Doctrine in Action; A Personal History (New York, 1941), p. 247; Broderick, Right Reverend, p. 213.

<sup>16</sup>Rev. Wilfrid Parsons, "The Church and the Modern World," The Catholic Mind, XXXI (June 8, 1933), 206.

<sup>17</sup>The Boston Pilot, October 21, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup>William C. Murphy, "The New Deal in Action," Commonweal, May 5, 1933, pp. 11-13.

States always received God's help in time of crisis. Thus, in 1933, "Almighty God raised up FDR--the Apostle of the New Deal."<sup>19</sup>

Major Catholic organizations were also enthusiastic in their support of the new President. The president of the International Catholic Truth Society, Reverend Edward L. Curran, wrote to Roosevelt praising his leadership and "high moral determination."<sup>20</sup> When the National Catholic Alumni Federation, representing fifty Catholic colleges and universities in the United States, held its national convention in New York City from June 20th to 24th, Edward Dare, a high-ranking member, transmitted to President Roosevelt copies of a resolution which praised and endorsed the New Deal.<sup>21</sup> The Catholic Daughters of America, through their Supreme Regent, Mary C. Duffy, sent copies of their resolutions pledging assistance to the President and expressing their confidence in him. These resolutions were passed at the national

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<sup>19</sup>Rev. W. D. O'Brien, "The New Deal in Religion," Extension, May, 1934, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup>Rev. E. L. Curran to FDR, April 19, 1933, Reel 1, Sel. Mat.

<sup>21</sup>Edward Dare to FDR, July 21, 1933, Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

convention in Colorado Springs, July 7, 1933, by a group which claimed a membership of 200,000.<sup>22</sup>

The list of Catholic groups supporting Roosevelt in 1933 is extensive. The Social Justice Bulletin, organ of the Catholic League for Social Justice, spoke of the obvious influence of Pius XI on the President in the actions undertaken by the New Deal.<sup>23</sup> The Polish Roman Catholic Union expressed faith in FDR's attempt to improve the country. Supporting remarks were made at the Union's triennial convention held in Springfield, Massachusetts.<sup>24</sup> The Knights of Columbus of Ironwood, Michigan, telegraphed to the President, praising his "determined and decisive action in the present financial emergency."<sup>25</sup>

The Catholic press was almost unanimous in its approval of Roosevelt's first hundred days in office. Commonweal expressed the predominant feeling when it said:

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<sup>22</sup>Mary C. Duffy to FDR, telegram, July 7, 1933, Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

<sup>23</sup>Social Justice Bulletin, No. 8, August 16, 1933, in Reel 1, Sel. Mat.

<sup>24</sup>New York Times, September 15, 1934, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup>K. of C. Council to FDR, telegram, March 8, 1933, Official File, Box 1, Roosevelt Papers.

. . .all Catholics who desire to give practical effect to the principles of social justice laid down by Pope Pius XI will see that . . . Roosevelt's opportunity to lead . . . is likewise the Catholic opportunity to make the teachings of Christ apply to the benefit of all. . . .<sup>26</sup>

The Denver Catholic Register had much to say in support of the New Deal. The editor pointed out that the alternatives to Roosevelt's program were communism and chaos. The New Deal should be supported because it had sprung from Catholic sources. "The Register and other powerful mouthpieces of the Catholic Church in this country," commented this editor, "have made the NCWC social action program so insistent that the government is now going to try it out, as the only real cure."<sup>27</sup> The Brooklyn Tablet called FDR's every action "motivated by a Christian philosophy which moves forward in the right direction."<sup>28</sup> Extension magazine said that the new President had done more in his brief tenure than had most of his predecessors during their entire time in office.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Commonweal, November 16, 1932, p. 58.

<sup>27</sup>Denver Catholic Register, June 29, 1933, p. 4; March 9, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, May 13, 1933, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup>Extension, XXVII (May, 1933), 13-14. These same optimistic notes were also struck by the following Catholic newspapers: The Catholic Herald, March 23, 1933, p. 4; The Boston Pilot, June 24, 1933, p. 4; The Catholic Transcript of Hartford, Connecticut, May 25, 1933, p. 4.

Yet in the praise lavished upon President Roosevelt by the Catholic press, there were certain features which indicate that some editors had only a superficial awareness of the principles of the New Deal. The editor of America praised FDR's inaugural address but at the same time called for frugality in government, something Roosevelt had mentioned in the campaign. The editor of the Davenport Catholic Messenger, who supported the New Deal, was most attracted by the President's plan to balance the budget. The NCWC News Service sent out cryptic stories indicating that the Democratic program giving great power to the President was "foreshadowing the curtailment of a number of Federal activities which have shown an unprecedented growth in the past two decades." The News Service pointed to FDR's governorship of New York as an indication that he was a strong believer in "the protection of States' rights against Federal encroachment." The Denver Catholic Register had perhaps the most farfetched interpretation of events. Its editor said that if the country was saved from economic disaster it would be because the Catholic Church had succeeded in "putting over her economic program." The Church had her best chance in history under Roosevelt. Furthermore, there was now "a real chance" for a large Federal spending program for relief



because "Al Smith is the power behind the throne and Al has the Catholic slant."<sup>30</sup>

Not all Catholic papers looked with favor on the New Deal. The Monitor of San Francisco, in particular, was a major critic of the administration. Its editor referred to the Brain Trust as communistic or fascistic in philosophy and described the "Hundred Days" as "cynically designed . . . to exploit the American people and make them the slaves of a proud and conceited clique of psuedo-intellectuals."<sup>31</sup> Yet such opinions were a minority.

Most Catholic spokesmen, as has been shown, were lavish in their praise of the New Deal and of President Roosevelt. The reasons for this praise are not readily apparent. The spokesmen themselves often pointed to contradictory tendencies in the New Deal when finding things to praise. Certainly the similarity--imagined or real--between the economic measures of the New Deal and Catholic teaching played a part. But there were more concrete political

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<sup>30</sup>America, March 18, 1933, p. 565; The Catholic Messenger, March 30, 1933, p. 2; NCWC News Service, February 13, 1933; The Catholic Herald, March 16, 1933, p. 4; Denver Catholic Register, March 2, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup>The Monitor, September 16, 1933, p. 10; November 11, 1933, p. 10.

considerations involved in Catholic motivation.

For one thing there was the appointment policy adopted by the new administration. Many American Catholics were hungry for recognition by appointment to a high post in the Federal government. One month before Roosevelt was elected, Catholics attending St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City heard the Reverend Henry F. Hammer complain that there was a conspiracy afoot to "keep Catholic men and women out of high national office." Father Hammer complained bitterly that a man could not "be a good Catholic and be a bad citizen." In December, 1932, one Catholic author had lamented the fact that there had been so few Catholics in past cabinets. But he was optimistic because he felt the bitter experience of 1928 should have purged everyone of bigotry.<sup>32</sup>

There was some justice in this charge of discrimination. To most Catholics, it seemed impossible that only four of their co-religionists had been qualified to serve in all Presidential cabinets from 1789 to 1932. Furthermore, only six Catholics had ever served on the Supreme Court. During the Republican rule of the 1920's, only one lower

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<sup>32</sup>New York Times, October 17, 1932, p. 13; Richard J. Purcell, "Catholics in the President's Cabinet," America, December 17, 1932, pp. 252-53.

judicial appointment out of every twenty-five had gone to a Catholic.<sup>33</sup>

Under Franklin Roosevelt these trends were to be sharply reversed. Two Catholics, James A. Farley and Thomas J. Walsh, were appointed to the cabinet. Catholics were given an average of one out of every four judicial appointments during FDR's entire term in office. As one historian has stated, under Roosevelt the Irish Catholic was given a chance to ascend from his vulgar role as local party boss to more glamorous positions with the Federal government.<sup>34</sup>

The appointment of Farley as Postmaster General and Walsh as Attorney General was a source of pride to many Catholics. Of course, many expected Farley to receive an appointment because of his fine work during the nomination race and presidential campaign.<sup>35</sup> Others speculated that

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<sup>33</sup>Ellis, American Catholicism, p. 149; Odegard, "Catholicism and Elections," p. 121; Lubell, Future of American Politics, p. 83.

<sup>34</sup>Shannon, American Irish, p. 331. Shannon points to such men as Thomas G. Corcoran, John McCormick, Joseph E. Casey, James Farley, Edward J. Flynn, Joseph P. Kennedy, and Frank Murphy as representing a young generation of Irishmen who were brought to national prominence by Roosevelt. James Farley admitted a certain satisfaction in being the first Catholic in a Presidential cabinet in the 20th Century. Interview with author, March 20, 1965.

<sup>35</sup>Shannon, American Irish, p. 372, says that Roosevelt started the tradition of giving the post of National Chairman of the Democratic party to an Irish Catholic.

there might even be more Catholics appointed to the cabinet. When Roosevelt named Walsh as Attorney General, it was noted that although he was a Catholic, there "was every reason that he should be appointed" because of his progressive record as a Senator and because of his prosecutor's role in the Teapot Dome Scandal.<sup>36</sup>

The announcement of the Farley and Walsh appointments provoked a favorable response from the Catholic press. The NCWC wire service sent out a story by Thomas E. Kissling, in which he pointed out that now, for the first time in the history of the United States, two Catholics would serve simultaneously in a Presidential cabinet.<sup>37</sup> Pictures of the two men were splattered all over the diocesan press. Colonel P. H. Callahan of Louisville, Kentucky, a prominent Catholic layman with a sharp political sense, made a survey of Catholic press reaction to the story. He forwarded to Louis Howe, presidential secretary, the news that most Catholic papers in the United States gave very favorable notice to the appointments.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Tugwell, Democratic Roosevelt, p. 267.

<sup>37</sup>NCWC News Service, March 4, 1932. This unique event failed to materialize when Walsh died unexpectedly before taking office.

<sup>38</sup>p. H. Callahan to Louis Howe, March 10, 1933, Reel 2, Sel. Mat.; The Brooklyn Tablet, March 4, 1933, and The Boston Pilot, March 11, 1933, both carried front page stories. After Walsh's death, The Boston Pilot gave major

The cabinet appointments were only one sign of increased Catholic recognition from Roosevelt. Equally satisfying to American Catholics were the diplomatic positions handed out. Two appointments were particularly important: that of Frank Murphy, Mayor of Detroit, as Governor-General of the Philippines, and that of Robert H. Gore as Governor of Puerto Rico. The Murphy appointment was a combination of diplomatic need and political reward. The Philippines were largely Catholic in population, which made the appointment of Murphy especially suitable. Furthermore, Murphy had worked long and hard for Roosevelt during the campaign. Roosevelt's brother-in-law, G. Hall Roosevelt, wrote to the President about Murphy's loyalty, pointing out that apart from the Mayor's many qualifications, he also had "tremendous Catholic influence." Murphy's personal desire for the Philippine position was also a factor in his selection.<sup>39</sup>

The reaction of the Catholic press to the appointment was characteristic. Murphy's picture was printed on many front pages, and it was noted that he was the first Catholic

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emphasis to the significance of a Catholic funeral being held in the State Chambers with prominent churchmen and the President being present. March 11, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup>Lunt, "Frank Murphy," p. 66.

to hold the position. With the Murphy appointment, wrote one editor, "President Roosevelt has added another Catholic to the list of those already occupying conspicuous places in his administrative family."<sup>40</sup> The appointment of Robert Hayes Gore as Governor of Puerto Rico met a similar response. Gore was a product of Catholic schools and had nine children. This last fact was a source of ironic amusement to some Catholics, as the previous Puerto Rican Governor had been sympathetic to the planned parenthood group on the Island.<sup>41</sup> Altogether, the editor of The Brooklyn Tablet felt that the Murphy and Gore appointments indicated that "days of fairness, as well as intelligence, are being inaugurated at Washington."<sup>42</sup>

Besides these appointments of prominent lay Catholics to public office, there was also the fact that a number of priests had been enlisted in support of New Deal projects. Most prominent of these were Reverend John A. Ryan and Reverend Francis J. Haas. Ryan was on the Advisory Council

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<sup>40</sup>Quoted in NCWC News Service, April 10, 1933; The Brooklyn Tablet, April 15, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup>America, May 20, 1933, p. 146; The Boston Pilot, May 20, 1933, p. 11.

<sup>42</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, May 13, 1933, p. 9.

of the United States Employment Service, the Advisory Committee of the Subsistence Homestead Division in the Interior Department, and the Industrial Appeals Board in the National Reconstruction Administration.<sup>43</sup> Haas received a telegram from Roosevelt on October 7, 1933, appointing him a member of the National Labor Board. The priest had previously been a member of the Labor Advisory Committee under the National Industrial Relations Act. Later, Haas would serve as labor representative on the General Code Authority, as a member of the National Committee on Business and Labor Standards, and as one of the three members of the Labor Policies Board of the Works Progress Administration.<sup>44</sup>

Across the country, in the summer of 1933, the Catholic clergy swung their support behind the NRA. A number of priests served as members of regional boards of the NRA. Archbishop Edward J. Hana of San Francisco was chairman of a presidential committee to deal with longshoremen's strikes. This role of the clergy in the early days of the New Deal

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<sup>43</sup>Broderick, Right Reverend, p. 213; Hon. Frances Perkins to Rev. John A. Ryan, August 5, 1933, Ryan Papers.

<sup>44</sup>Roosevelt to Haas, telegram, October 7, 1933, and Roosevelt to Haas, December 18, 1935, Correspondence-personal, 1932, and Miscellaneous, Haas Papers at Catholic University, Washington, D.C.; Reverend Michael J. Ready to Stephen Early, December 17, 1935, Reel 2, Sel. Mat.

justified Father Ryan's statement in late 1934 that "there are more Catholics in public positions, high and low, in the Federal Government today than ever before in the history of the country."<sup>45</sup>

Whether Roosevelt made these appointments with an eye on the Catholic vote is really not the main consideration. The important thing is that Roosevelt did begin a trend toward using Catholics at high levels of government and this trend was recognized by prominent Catholic spokesmen. It is not insignificant that Colonel P. H. Callahan could send to Louis Howe numerous clippings of diocesan papers praising Catholic appointments, that the Knights of Columbus of New York City and of New Hampshire should send congratulatory telegrams on the cabinet appointments of Farley and Walsh.<sup>46</sup> The NCWC News Service denied that there was any "substantial basis" for the assumption that religion played a part in FDR's appointments, but they also pointed out that "President Roosevelt has gone further than most, if not all, his

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<sup>45</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan to James Moran, September 28, 1934, Ryan Papers.

<sup>46</sup>William Flynn to President Roosevelt, March 17, 1933, and Charles Doherty to Roosevelt, telegram [n.d.], Official File, Box 28, Roosevelt Papers; Col. P. H. Callahan to Louis Howe, March 10, 1933, Box 4, Official File, 76-B, Roosevelt Papers.



predecessors in nominating Catholics for important posts."<sup>47</sup> The Brooklyn Tablet expressed pride in the fact that they had predicted that Roosevelt would show more "regard" for Catholics and that the old policy of nonrecognition would be discarded.<sup>48</sup> A more hard-headed line was taken by The Michigan Catholic, whose editor felt that Catholics should not act like children because they gained recognition in the presidential cabinet appointments. The new recognition was no more than just for a group representing one-sixth of the country's population. Yet this editor could not deny that FDR "deserves much credit" for changing the former policy of exclusion.<sup>49</sup>

If President Roosevelt's appointment policy helped his image among American Catholics in 1933, of added significance were the direct contacts he sought with the Church during his first year in office. His two most notable public contacts were his acceptance of an honorary degree from Catholic University in June and his speech at the annual meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Charities in October.

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<sup>47</sup>NCWC News Service, April 10, 1933; April 17, 1933.

<sup>48</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, December 30, 1933, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup>The Michigan Catholic, March 2, 1933, p. 4.

Roosevelt received his honorary degree on June 14, in Washington, D. C.<sup>50</sup> The major speech of the occasion was made by Patrick Cardinal Hayes, Archbishop of New York. The Cardinal prefaced his remarks with congratulations to a President who was "moving forward with courage and intelligence" to combat the crisis of the depression. "Your actions," the Cardinal continued, "spring from but one motive, namely, the advancement of the Common Good." The remainder of Cardinal Hayes' speech was an elaboration on this theme of the "Common Good." He pointed out that while private associations might do much to curtail unfair competition and ruthless business practices, this was not enough. Something was needed which would represent the interest of all the people, and this was where the Federal government entered the picture. The government should protect individual rights and promote human welfare, for these were "activities which cannot adequately be carried on by private efforts." The extension of the government into many areas of society should be viewed

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<sup>50</sup>This honor had been arranged by Reverend Maurice Sheehy and James Farley. Sheehy had approached Farley with the idea and the latter had urged FDR to accept the honor. Farley, interview with author, March 20, 1965. Later Sheehy and Archbishop James H. Ryan called on FDR and made a formal invitation. Sheehy letter to author, November 16, 1963.

as a good trend, just as laissez-faire was a bad trend. Certain individual rights might be curtailed by this action, but such restrictions could be justified on the basis of the common good. Furthermore, in time of crisis, citizens should not expect the government to be bound by precedents, but should expect bold strokes of experimentation. Centralization of power may be necessary, and "one clear, confident voice can save hundreds from panic."<sup>51</sup>

President Roosevelt, who had not planned to speak, was moved by the auspicious occasion to offer a few impromptu remarks. He referred to the Cardinal as "my old friend and neighbor from New York," and commented that his own presence among the "great dignitaries of the Church, and the added fact that it was Flag Day made a "happy combination."<sup>52</sup>

What appears as a rather dull academic gathering was, instead, for the Catholics who viewed the event, a moment of pride. FDR had been impressed with Cardinal Hayes' address and requested a copy. The Cardinal obliged two days later, and, in an accompanying letter, thanked the President for "the wonderful tribute you paid to the Catholic people of America

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<sup>51</sup>Address on "The Common Good," by Patrick Cardinal Hayes at Washington, June 14, 1933, copy in Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

<sup>52</sup>The Catholic World, CXXXVII (July, 1933), 493.

by your distinguished presence and kindly words."<sup>53</sup> The Catholic press was quick to echo these sentiments. Even the banal remarks made by the President were recorded with scriptual care. One editor remarked that Cardinal Hayes' endorsement of the New Deal was seconded by all American Catholics.<sup>54</sup> To some, FDR's appearance indicated "a change for the better in the public mind toward the Church." The President himself manifested "a splendid feeling of good will" toward the Church, in contrast to the isolation suffered from the last four presidents.<sup>55</sup> One Catholic priest in Detroit felt that giving Roosevelt an honorary degree was inadequate. Reverend Charles E. Coughlin wrote the President that "a thousand such honors could never manifest the gratitude which the American people owe you for what you have already accomplished."<sup>56</sup>

The second public manifestation of Roosevelt's rapport

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<sup>53</sup>Patrick Cardinal Hayes to President Roosevelt, June 16, 1933, Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

<sup>54</sup>Pax, official organ of Benedictine Missionary Fathers, July, 1933, pp. 126-27; Commonweal, June 30, 1933, p. 227.

<sup>55</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, June 24, 1933, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup>Quoted in Peter Morris, "Father Coughlin and the New Deal" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Columbia University, 1958), p. 24.

with the Church was in connection with the annual meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, held in New York City during October, 1933. At the opening session of the meeting, Harry Hopkins addressed the gathering on "National Trends in Relief." More important, however, was the appearance of President Roosevelt to give the main address at the final dinner of the convention. Patrick Cardinal Hayes was again the first speaker of the evening and again he praised Roosevelt's leadership. Hayes called for a new social order of justice with a wider distribution of ownership, higher wages, and lower hours. The Cardinal declared the formation of trade associations to be a "major step forward," and commented that if these groups were just in their actions, the Federal government would not have to oversee them. But in any case, such justice must prevail. The Cardinal concluded his remarks with a strong statement on the responsibility of the government for the public welfare:

In fact, the claims of the common welfare on ownership are so strong that the State, though it enjoys no right to abolish the private ownership of property, is justified, with due regard to the natural and divine law, in adjusting this ownership and controlling its use so as to bring it into harmony with the interests of the public good.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Address of Patrick Cardinal Hayes, October 4, 1933, in Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

After this speech, which seemed to endorse much of Roosevelt's efforts, Monsignor Robert Keegan, Secretary to Cardinal Hayes and a leader in the NCCC, introduced the President. Keegan spoke of FDR's "clear vision" and "accurate appreciation" of the evils of laissez-faire capitalism. He ended his introduction by declaring, "we love him [Roosevelt] for the man and friend he is."<sup>58</sup>

As Roosevelt spoke, he must have been aware that the speeches preceding his own indicated strong support for him from the NCCC. His speech stressed the need for continued relief work by private agencies; the Federal government could not carry the load alone. Furthermore, the success of relief work depended to a large degree on personal contacts which were better achieved by small private associations. Private church relief was also important, because, said the President, the people believe "spiritual values count in the long run more than material values." Pursuing another theme, the President remarked that all attempts by governments to interfere with the right of religious worship had failed and would continue to fail, because such interference contradicted a basic human need. In conclusion, FDR

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

expressed optimism about the ability of the United States to overcome its current difficulties. In terms undoubtedly selected for his Catholic audience, Roosevelt remarked:

With every passing year I become more confident that humanity is moving forward to the practical application of the teachings of Christianity as they affect the individual lives of men and women everywhere.<sup>59</sup>

The President's speech was received enthusiastically by many Catholics. Monsignor Keegan later wrote to FDR thanking him for the "inspiration and encouragement" he had given the NCCC. Father Keegan spoke of the great love that Catholics had for the President.<sup>60</sup> Reverend Aloysius J. Hogan, S.J., the President of Fordham University, felt that there was growing evidence that "Catholics had given a soul to the New Deal."<sup>61</sup> One editor considered FDR's mere presence at the NCCC meeting "a stirring tribute to the Church's efforts to help our fellowmen."<sup>62</sup> Before a Council of Catholic Women meeting in Chicago, Cardinal Mundelein referred to Roosevelt's appearance at the NCCC in glowing terms. The

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<sup>59</sup>Rosenman, Public Papers, II, 379-81.

<sup>60</sup>Msgr. Robert Keegan to President Roosevelt, October 9, 1933, President's Personal File, 628, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>61</sup>Quoted in Columbia, November, 1933, p. 7.

<sup>62</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, October 7, 1933, p. 9.

Cardinal called the President a physician who had prevented an uprising in the United States and who would cure the nation's ills. Even Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, praised Roosevelt's remarks on the necessity of religion in all social works.<sup>63</sup>

As Roosevelt spoke in New York City, other members of the administration were also addressing Catholic groups on the New Deal. Brooks Hays, Stanley Reed, and Arthur J. Altmeyer of the Social Security Board addressed a gathering of Catholics in Peoria, Illinois, and asked for support of the New Deal.<sup>64</sup> As 1933 drew to a close, it was obvious that Roosevelt had the support of a large segment of the leaders of the Church. It remains now to examine the specific measures of the New Deal and to determine the way these measures were interpreted by the Church.

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<sup>63</sup>Cited by The Catholic Herald, October 25, 1933, p. 1. The New World of Chicago was even more enthusiastic. In an editorial entitled "Coming Into Our Own," the paper stressed the fact that FDR's appearance at the NCCC meeting was one more bit of evidence that Roman Catholics were no longer considered outsiders. The old idea of the Catholic Church as the prime defender of the status quo was being rejected. Roosevelt's appearance had indicated that "Catholic social teaching is making headway far beyond what is commonly thought." The New World, October 13, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>64</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, October 12, 1933, p. 9.



## CHAPTER VI

### FINANCE AND AGRICULTURE

In their reaction to Roosevelt's approach to fiscal and agricultural problems, American Catholics exhibited at once a sense of radicalism and of nostalgia. Most Catholics welcomed the attempts by the administration to curtail the power of Wall Street and to regulate the currency. They showed a similar response to agricultural reforms, but for unique reasons.

American Catholics shared the relief experienced by their fellow citizens when Franklin Roosevelt began his term of office by closing the banks of the nation to prevent their internal collapse. They hoped that Roosevelt would have the courage to withstand the assault which, they felt, would soon be launched upon his policies by the "money powers."<sup>1</sup> While the Banking Holiday and the subsequent Reform Act were viewed by some Catholics as authoritarian in tone, others praised the measures as steps necessary to curb the greed of wealth.

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<sup>1</sup>Denver Catholic Register, March 9, 1933, p. 1.

This was, wrote The Catholic Herald, a "New Deal in which the cards are not stacked by greed and power against the people and their government."<sup>2</sup>

When FDR attempted to relieve the depression by manipulating the amount of gold content in the dollar, Catholics shared the confusion of most citizens. Some of them, however, felt that Roosevelt's measures of calling in gold and restricting the importing of it were mere "common sense."<sup>3</sup> Al Smith condemned the currency manipulation as producing "baloney dollars," but Smith, for several reasons, failed to swing Catholic opinion against FDR's dollar policy. To begin with, Smith's defection on this issue was more than compensated for by the support the President received from Father Coughlin, the radio priest of Detroit. Coughlin wrote to FDR in October, approving the stabilization of gold at \$31.75 an ounce and the dollar at 65 cents.<sup>4</sup> He fully supported FDR's attempts at manipulation. This support led

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<sup>2</sup>The Catholic Herald, March 23, 1933, p. 4; Commonweal, March 22, 1933, p. 563; The Catholic World, CXXXVIII (December, 1933), 257-59.

<sup>3</sup>Extension, XXVIII (July, 1933), 21.

<sup>4</sup>Rev. Charles Coughlin to President Roosevelt, telegram, October 4, 1933, Official File 229, Box 3, Roosevelt Papers.

Coughlin to attack the ideas of Al Smith. The priest chose a November 27 rally in New York City to defend the President's policy against the Smith charges. While expressing regret at having to correct such a gentleman as Smith, Coughlin felt that it was "Roosevelt or ruin" and that he had to take a stand. In his public address, Coughlin implied that Smith was attacking Roosevelt's monetary policies because the ex-Governor wanted a loan from J. P. Morgan for the Empire State Building.<sup>5</sup>

While many Catholics shared Coughlin's doubts about the validity of Smith's criticism, few liked his personal attack on the 1928 standard bearer. As one student of the period has noted, "a situation which disclosed the nation's leading Catholic layman and its most widely known clergyman calling each other names was discomfiting to many Catholics."<sup>6</sup> Yet it was evident that Roosevelt's measures had support from others besides Coughlin. Some Catholics admitted that FDR's formula for recovery might be ineffective

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<sup>5</sup>Dyson, "The Quest for Power," p. 20; Morris, "Father Coughlin," p. 42; Commonweal, December 8, 1933, p. 144.

<sup>6</sup>Dyson, "The Quest for Power," p. 20. See also Denver Catholic Register, November 30, 1933, p. 1; The Brooklyn Tablet, December 9, 1933, p. 11.

but they quickly pointed out that "his objective is ethically sound, and sound in common sense."<sup>7</sup> Father John Ryan thought the fears by some of excessive inflation were exaggerated. Although he did not mention Smith by name, Ryan announced that he was opposed to direct inflation but that he saw little in Roosevelt's program to indicate that this policy had any backing in the administration.<sup>8</sup> This fear of inflation was shared by Reverend John Burke, Secretary of the NCWC, who praised Roosevelt's decision to veto the Patman Veteran's Bonus Bill because it was inflationary.<sup>9</sup>

One popular reaction to Roosevelt's fiscal policy was expressed by Commonweal magazine. After praising FDR's decision not to abide by the findings of the London Economic Conference, the editors announced that the central thesis of the New Deal's monetary policy was that there is to be "public control, through the government, of money and credit, rather than the system of banker's control." This particular policy, the editors continued, is "in line with the

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<sup>7</sup>Commonweal, December 15, 1935, p. 170.

<sup>8</sup>Father Ryan to Ray E. Jones, February 17, 1933, Box 3; Ryan to Dr. G. P. McEntee, December 13, 1933, Box 4, Ryan Papers.

<sup>9</sup>Rev. John Burke to President Roosevelt, May 27, 1935, Reel 2, Sel. Mat.

assumptions of Pope Pius XI, expressed in Quadragesimo Anno.<sup>10</sup>

Interesting, for the light it throws on Catholic thought, are the comments provoked by the Senate investigation of Wall Street pursuant to passage of legislation to regulate the stock market. The Securities Act, passed in May, 1933, gave the Federal Trade Commission more control over the issuing of new securities, required more information on the solvency of new stock, and made liability for misrepresentation more specific. The passage of this law was made easy by the public support engendered as a result of a Senate investigation of Wall Street which had been started by Hoover, and which was carried on with great zeal in 1933 by its chief counsel, Ferdinand Pecora of New York.

The Administrative Committee of the NCWC, representing the views of the American hierarchy, supported the Pecora investigations and FDR's policy of policing Wall Street.<sup>11</sup> The official organ of the Knights of Columbus also came out in support of the investigation and of Roosevelt's stand. The magazine Columbia felt that the American press was trying

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<sup>10</sup>Commonweal, July 21, 1933, p. 297.

<sup>11</sup>The Catholic World, CXXXVIII (December, 1933), 3.

to "white wash" Wall Street. The editor expressed a note of class feeling when he pointed out that J. P. Morgan got a better press because of his wealth.<sup>12</sup>

Elements of the Catholic press joined the call for a correction of the evils revealed by the Pecora investigation. A cure was needed. Whether this cure took the form of inflation, rejection of the gold standard, or a dose of "baloney dollars," was considered beside the point.<sup>13</sup> When Congress finally passed the Federal Securities Act, to control some of the problems, one editor thought it would stand for some time because it was based on "sound morality." By this he meant that the law put both the buyer and seller of securities on common ground.<sup>14</sup>

Finance, however, was only one of the major problems facing the New Dealers in 1933. Equally significant were the difficulties of the American farmer. Despite the fact that most of the Catholic population in the United States resided in urban areas, the Church had early addressed itself to the plight of the farmer who was suffering from the

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<sup>12</sup>Columbia, April, 1933, pp. 11, 13.

<sup>13</sup>The Catholic Herald, December 7, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>The Catholic Messenger, February 3, 1934, p. 2.

depression. The main source of Catholic thought on agriculture was the Rural Life Bureau of the NCWC, led by Reverend Edgar Schmiedeler. Schmiedeler, together with other Catholic priests and bishops, was to formulate the Church's attitude toward the farm problem. While not an elaborate or detailed plan, the philosophy behind Catholic thinking on agriculture was sufficiently unique to permit its isolation as a kind of Catholic Agrarianism.

As early as July, 1932, Schmiedeler had stated the aims of the Rural Life Bureau as being "the preservation and enrichment of the farm home."<sup>15</sup> It was a recurring theme for many Catholic thinkers that farming afforded a better opportunity to lead a truly Christian life. Not that this idea was unique because it had been popular with all kinds since the time of Thomas Jefferson.<sup>16</sup> For these Catholics the chief benefit of rural living was the social stability it promoted. On the other hand, life in the city was conducive both to unstable personal relations and to atheism. An urbanite was more susceptible to atheism because of his "contact with brick and mortar, with concrete and steel--the

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<sup>15</sup>Quoted in The Boston Pilot, July 30, 1932, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup>Paul R. Conkin, Tomorrow a New World (Ithaca, New York, 1959), p. 12.

things of man--[rather]--than with nature, and nature's beauties--the things of God." Thus spoke Reverend Dr. Schmiedeler to a group of Catholic teachers in Kansas in 1936.<sup>17</sup> Another popular theme in Catholic discussions of rural life was the tendency to attribute the rise in birth control to the crowded living conditions in the city. Farm families, in contrast, were generally large. Using these ideas, some Catholics began to urge a "back to the land" movement.

Such a movement was endorsed by the Administrative Committee of the NCWC in a statement on April 25, 1933, and by the Catholic Rural Life Conference in October, 1933.<sup>18</sup> The bishops on the Administrative Committee pointed out that the depression was, in part, a result of the Industrial Revolution, which had pushed people off the farm into crowded cities inadequate to support them. As a remedy, the bishops

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<sup>17</sup>Quoted in Catholic Action, August, 1936, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup>NCWC News Service, October 19, 1933; Conkin, Tomorrow, p. 28, says "never before in the history of the United States had back-to-the-land been so popular" as in 1932. The CRLC was started in 1923 and advocated "property as a right and a responsibility, denounced farm tenancy, advocated subsistence farming, and . . . attempted to guide the back-to-the-land movement." See ibid., p. 25; see also Raymond P. Witte, Twenty-Five Years of Crusading (Des Moines, Iowa, 1948).



called for a return to the independent life of the farm.<sup>19</sup> Other Catholics expressed the fear that the depression would force more farmers into the city and thereby turn them into "aimless, drifting, proletariat."<sup>20</sup> Some criticized the ruthless capitalism and laissez-faire attitude of the government as having contributed to the depression. But they also tended to categorize the "fostering of the drift of population from the country-sides to the slums of great cities" and the "denial to the farmer of a just and stable price for his products," as other evils of the existing economic system.<sup>21</sup>

During the 1932 Presidential campaign, Catholics showed a distinct interest in the farm problem. F. P. Kenkel, director of the Catholic Central Verein of St. Louis, Missouri, wrote that the American farmer should be acutely aware of the effect on him of future economic planning which

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<sup>19</sup>Huber, Our Bishops Speak, pp. 296-97. This statement of the Administrative Committee was signed by the Archbishop of San Francisco, Edward J. Hana; Archbishop of Cincinnati, John T. McNicholas; Archbishop of St. Paul, Minnesota, John G. Murray; Bishop of Cleveland, Joseph Schrembs; Bishop of Pittsburg, Hugh C. Boyle; Bishop of Fort Wayne, Indiana, John F. Noll; Bishop of Kansas City, Missouri, Thomas F. Lillis.

<sup>20</sup>The Catholic Herald, September 8, 1932, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup>James F. Murphy, Presidential Address at 18th Session of NCCC, Proceedings, Omaha, Nebraska, September 25-28, 1932, p. 6.

was being discussed in the campaign.<sup>22</sup> Father John Ryan was impressed with the ideas set forth by Roosevelt in his speech at Topeka, Kansas, during the campaign. Here Roosevelt had promised to reorganize the Department of Agriculture, to lower taxes for farmers, and to pass laws for Federal financing of farm mortgages and for a voluntary domestic allotment plan to relieve surpluses.<sup>23</sup> To Father Ryan the domestic allotment plan looked like the best way to help the farmers by obtaining "better prices for staple agricultural products." He hoped that Roosevelt would support the idea if elected and only regretted that the candidate had not been more clear in his advocacy of the plan.<sup>24</sup>

Ryan had good reason to be disturbed by FDR's vagueness on the question. When Reverend W. Howard Bishop, President of the Catholic Rural Life Conference, wrote to the Democratic candidate, he enclosed a resolution of his organization which endorsed the domestic allotment plan as the best way to give needed relief to our farmers. Father

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<sup>22</sup>F. P. Kenkel, "The Farmer and Economic Planning," NCCC Proceedings, 1932, p. 200.

<sup>23</sup>James M. Burns, Roosevelt: The Lion and The Fox (New York, 1956), p. 142.

<sup>24</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan to Professor W. L. Wilson, September 17, 1932, Ryan Papers.

Bishop asked Roosevelt what his plans were in this matter. Roosevelt replied through his secretary that he was not as yet completely committed to a definite plan for agriculture, but he referred Father Bishop to the campaign speech at Topeka.<sup>25</sup>

After the 1932 election, Catholic agricultural thought still centered upon the domestic allotment plan. Some accepted it because they thought it would create the least disturbance in the world's prices. It was better than surplus dumping, which might produce retaliatory trade measures by foreign nations.<sup>26</sup> By January, 1933, Father Ryan was supporting the idea of "parity payments" as being "by far the best method" of raising agricultural prices.<sup>27</sup> Others felt that no adequate adjustment of agricultural prices could be hoped for without a simultaneous plan to provide work and better wages for the city labor expected to consume the farm products.<sup>28</sup> It was also recognized, however,

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<sup>25</sup>Frank O'Hara, "The Voluntary Domestic Allotment Plan," The Catholic World, CXXXVI (March, 1933), 641-48; The Catholic Messenger, December 1, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>Central-Blatt and Social Justice, January, 1933, p. 303.

<sup>27</sup>Father Ryan to D. P. Hughes, January 10, 1933, Ryan Papers.

<sup>28</sup>The Catholic Herald, February 9, 1933, p. 4.

that the debt-ridden condition of the farmer had to be changed before any scheme to raise prices could be effective. Further, wrote one Catholic editor, "since Society and the State both sinned by permitting land to be treated as mere chattel, they should now provide for the reduction of farm mortgages."<sup>29</sup>

The Catholic hierarchy also made it clear that it supported immediate aid to the farmer. In June, 1933, a group of bishops meeting in Cincinnati came out for local and regional cooperation by farmers to offset the flux in world prices. They pointed out that a healthy rural economy was the foundation for any national recovery. In a statement of first principles the bishops remarked: "The first duty of the farmer is not to produce, but to live, and to live in a manner befitting his worth as a man and his dignity as a child of God."<sup>30</sup>

In order to live, however, the bishops realized that the farmer would need higher prices for his produce. A reform of the United States economic system was required to

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<sup>29</sup>Central-Blatt and Social Justice, April, 1933, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup>Bishops of the Cincinnati Province, "Agriculture and Catholic Principles," The Catholic Mind, XXXI (July 8, 1933), 252-60.

produce this rise. The farmer must be protected against the instability of the open market. Going this far, however, the bishops clearly pointed out that they did not call for the industrialization or collectivization of American agriculture. Realizing that cooperation and government assistance would be necessary to relieve the farmer, the bishops were nevertheless vague on specific remedies. Actually their position presented them with a dilemma. On the one hand, they wanted to preserve at all cost the individualism and independence of the farmer. Yet they also saw the need for cooperation and State assistance if the independent farmer was to survive.<sup>31</sup>

This was the state of Catholic agrarian thought when the Congress approved the agricultural policies of the New Deal. The major agricultural measure was the Agricultural Adjustment Act, passed on May 12, 1933, which curtailed production and established parity prices. Farmers were granted

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., passim; see also Catholic Action, July, 1933, p. 4. The bishops who signed this statement included: Archbishop John T. McNicholas of Cincinnati; Bishop James J. Hartley of Columbus, Ohio; Bishop Joseph Chartrand of Indianapolis; Bishop Joseph Schrembs of Cleveland; Bishop Michael J. Gallanger of Detroit; Bishop Francis W. Howard of Covington, Kentucky; Bishop Alphonse J. Smith of Nashville; Bishop John F. Noll of Fort Wayne, Indiana; Bishop Karl J. Alter of Toledo, Ohio.

payments for voluntary reduction of crops. A tax on processors of farm products was the source of relief money. Farm mortgages could be refinanced through Federal Land Banks at lower interest rates. The entire law was to be carried out by an Agricultural Adjustment Administration under the Secretary of Agriculture, Henry Wallace.<sup>32</sup>

Henry Wallace had strong support among important elements of the Catholic Church. Foremost among his backers was the Reverend Maurice S. Sheehy, a faculty member at Catholic University and a close friend of Father John Ryan. Sheehy had remarked that "few persons in American public life know better and agree more completely with the Catholic conception of social justice than Mr. Wallace."<sup>33</sup> The Secretary of Agriculture, said Sheehy, had quoted from the Papal encyclicals of Pius XI and Leo XIII on numerous occasions. Sheehy felt certain that Wallace was using the Papal teachings in his approach to the farm problem.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt, pp. 48, 51, 52.

<sup>33</sup>Rev. M. S. Sheehy, "Henry A. Wallace and the Papal Encyclicals," clipping from Daily Tribune, Dubuque, Iowa [n.d.], in Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

<sup>34</sup>Sheehy, "Henry Wallace," Reel 3, Sel. Mat.; Sheehy was to support Wallace's bid for the Vice-Presidency in 1940, Sheehy, letter to author, November 16, 1963.

Other Catholics watched the debate on the farm bill with mixed emotions. The Commonweal was frankly confused as to the theory behind the Agricultural Adjustment Act and called it "a very good substitute for a jig-saw puzzle." While deploring the "paternalism" it seemed to establish in agriculture, the editor accepted it as an experiment and admitted that something drastic had to be done in this area.<sup>35</sup> Father John Ryan felt the bill might help the farmer. When the processing tax feature of the act was attacked as being unconstitutional by Professor Edwin W. Kemmerer of Princeton, Ryan defended the administration's position. The priest had certain doubts about AAA but felt that Roosevelt's spirit of experimentation was to be applauded. William F. Montavon, Director of the Legal Action Department of the NCWC, called the AAA a good plan but was afraid it imposed too heavy an administrative burden on President Roosevelt and Secretary Wallace.<sup>36</sup>

A few Catholics took a more positive stand in support of the bill. Listeners of the weekly Boston radio program,

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<sup>35</sup>Commonweal, April 5, 1933, pp. 620-21.

<sup>36</sup>William F. Montavon, "Constructive Work of the 73rd Congress," Catholic Action, August, 1933, pp. 7-10; Broderick, Right Reverend, pp. 212-13.

The Catholic Truth Hour, heard Reverend Jones I. Corrigan, S.J., announce that the AAA had "saved agriculture by substituting planned control for anarchy."<sup>37</sup> The annual convention of the Catholic Rural Life Conference, held in Milwaukee on October 19, 1933, adopted resolutions endorsing the AAA and subsistence farming. The CRLC also called for more speed in implementing farm relief.<sup>38</sup> Reverend Edgar Schmiedeler, Director of the NCWC Rural Life Bureau, went on the radio in November, 1933, to praise the agricultural program of the New Deal. He called the AAA "a charter of economic equality with the city" for the farmer. He admitted that much was yet to be done, but he praised the results thus far accomplished by Roosevelt as "a foundation whereon to build a rural life worthy of America."<sup>39</sup>

Naturally there were elements in the Catholic population that disagreed with Father Schmiedeler's praise of the AAA. Father Coughlin wrote to FDR in August, 1933, that the proposals of the AAA were "foolish" and embodied "puerile policy" and an "asinine philosophy."<sup>40</sup> In California, the

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<sup>37</sup>Quoted in The Boston Pilot, October 21, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup>NCWC News Service, October 26, 1933.

<sup>39</sup>Quoted in Catholic Action, November, 1933, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup>Morris, "Father Coughlin," p. 29.



San Francisco Monitor applauded the New Deal's attempt to relieve farm mortgages but felt the idea of paying rent for unused land was "foolish." The editor was convinced that AAA would mean the end of the American farmer. The rural population would be forced into the city to be exploited as cheap labor by industry.<sup>41</sup>

As the control policies of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration unfolded, there arose considerable opposition among certain segments of the population. Father Coughlin and others looked with disfavor upon the destruction of crops and pigs. Father Ryan, however, was more generous in his observations. To a friend's query about the moral obligation to use excess food to feed poor foreign nations, Ryan replied that for such a noble deed to have any effect it would have to be continued over a long period. He thought "it would be very difficult to prove the existence of such a moral obligation." Ryan did not think that American farmers were obliged to feed foreigners from their surplus.<sup>42</sup> The Catholic Farmer of Wisconsin also came to the defense of Wallace and the AAA.

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<sup>41</sup>The Monitor, September 16, 1933, p. 10 and April 16, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup>Father John Ryan to Rev. Urban Baer, February 23, 1934, Ryan Papers.

The editor of this paper defended both the Secretary and the President against charges of excess waste in solving the farm problem, but he did fear that the "radical farm bloc" in Congress might force the administration into a more totalitarian approach to the rural depression. It would not do, he felt, to have the Government telling the farmer what, and how much, to plant.<sup>43</sup>

By the end of 1934, most American Catholics could echo the sentiments expressed in November by the Catholic Rural Life Conference at their annual meeting in St. Paul. The Conference adopted a resolution which commended the efforts of the New Deal "to bring debt relief to the American farmer." But the CRLC also realized that other areas of the farm problem were still unresolved.<sup>44</sup>

At the annual meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, held in Cincinnati, October 7-10, 1934, the delegates heard Reverend Luigi Ligutti of Granger, Iowa, make an impassioned plea for the small farmers of the country. Ligutti insisted that the preponderance of large corporate farms over small family-owned farms was one of the

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<sup>43</sup>The Catholic Farmer (supplement to The Catholic Herald), June 14, 1934, p. 1 and December 13, 1934, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup>Catholic Action, December, 1934, p. 19.

main problems facing American agriculture. The large farms permitted too much waste, said Ligutti, who called for "a return to small farm ownership." How this would curtail the problem of overproduction, he did not say. But he wanted more people on farms and felt that the break-up of large farms and extension of long-term Federal loans with low interest rates to young independent homesteaders would accomplish this goal. This theme of the need to return to the small family farm was one of the recurring ideas of Catholic agrarianism.<sup>45</sup> Earlier a Catholic editor had called the subsistence homestead movement "one of the sanest plans in our national reconstruction."<sup>46</sup>

President Roosevelt had always favored the idea of subsistence homesteads as a means of relieving the farm problem. With FDR's support, Senator John Bankhead of Alabama incorporated an appropriation for the execution of such a scheme into the National Industrial Recovery Act.<sup>47</sup> Father

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<sup>45</sup>NCCC Proceedings, October 7-10, 1934, pp. 265-66. Father Ligutti's interesting story is told in Conkin, Tomorrow, pp. 296-301. He was a leader in CRLC "and one of the most influential of American agrarians and distributists." See ibid., p. 294.

<sup>46</sup>Denver Catholic Register, April 22, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt, p. 136.

Ryan had been an early supporter of the Bankhead proposal. "It seems to me," he wrote, "that this [subsistence homestead idea] is a very meritorious project and deserving of the support of all who would like to see some of the unemployed become self-supporting as farmers."<sup>48</sup> Indeed, Bankhead's early proposal fitted perfectly with the Catholic idea of a "back to the land movement" and the advantages of rural life over urban. In fact, President Roosevelt also shared this idea of the advantages of rural living.<sup>49</sup>

By 1935, Senator Bankhead had formulated a bill designed to aid tenant farmers and farm laborers in becoming genuine landowners. The bill, in the opinion of one historian, "reflected the reformers' faith in the Jeffersonian dream of the yeoman farmer."<sup>50</sup> If this is true, then many American Catholics were enamored by this dream. The National Catholic Rural Life Conference, meeting in Rochester, New York, October 27-30, 1935, was quick to support the bill. This organization spoke up for the New Deal's attempt at rural resettlement and for anything which would encourage an

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<sup>48</sup>Father John Ryan to Rev. Howard W. Bishop, May 3, 1933, Ryan Papers.

<sup>49</sup>Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt, p. 136.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

urban to rural movement. The NCRL spelled out the advantages of the Bankhead bill as "enabling tenant farmers, their sons, and farm-minded city people to become independent proprietors."<sup>51</sup>

Father Schmiedeler, director of the Rural Life Bureau, also spoke in favor of the bill. "We find," said Schmiedeler, "that the general principles underlying the Bankhead bill are in thorough accord with the Catholic attitude toward land ownership." He then went on to quote from the writings of Leo XIII, who favored as large a diffusion of land ownership as possible. The priest felt that if more laborers could gain a share in the land, the gulf between vast wealth and deep poverty would be narrowed.<sup>52</sup>

Members attending the 21st annual meeting of the NCCC at Peoria, Illinois, September 29 through October 2, 1935, heard a number of speakers endorse the Bankhead bill. Reverend James M. Campbell, president of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, called for an immediate program of land resettlement as an alternative to the dole system for combating chronic unemployment. He pointed out that

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<sup>51</sup>Quoted in Catholic Action, December, 1935, p. 25.

<sup>52</sup>NCWC News Service, April 13, 1935.

. . . a land resettlement program . . . that would provide reasonable terms of repayment and low rates of interest, and that would assist the people to develop cooperative undertaking, would not fall very far short of a self-liquidating program.

Campbell concluded by warning the Church that she could not afford to neglect the land resettlement program.<sup>53</sup>

The Roosevelt administration had its own advocate at this meeting in the person of Brooks Hayes, Special Assistant to the Rural Resettlement Administration. The RRA, headed by Rexford Tugwell, had been set up in April, 1935, to promote rural rehabilitation by loans to farmers for the tools of their craft and by "massive resettlement and retraining of exhausted farmers."<sup>54</sup> Before his audience at the NCC meeting, Hayes pushed the idea of resettlement by citing the work of Reverend Luigi Ligutti of Granger, Iowa. Father Ligutti had formed a sponsor group for resettlement in his area and had succeeded admirably. Hayes used this example to make his point about the need of "enlightened religious leaders" in the fight for better opportunity for "economic exiles" such as tenant farmers.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>NCCC Proceedings, September 29-October 2, 1935, pp. 98-102.

<sup>54</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Coming of the New Deal (Boston, 1959), p. 370.

<sup>55</sup>NCCC Proceedings, September 29-October 2, 1935, p. 96.

Important elements of the Catholic press also came to the support of the Bankhead bill. The Commonweal thought it merited "the strongest support of all Americans" because it would guarantee liberty, which was dependent upon "the possession of really personal property in land by great numbers of individuals." The editor also quoted the statement of Leo XIII on the need for wide ownership of land, and the statement by Pius XI on the right of the State to "adjust ownership [of property] to meet the needs of the public good."<sup>56</sup> The Jesuit magazine America echoed these sentiments and called for support of the efforts of the Catholic Rural Life Conference in its campaign for a wider distribution of land ownership.<sup>57</sup> The Catholic Interracial Review also found support for the Bankhead bill in the teachings of Leo XIII. The idea of spreading private ownership of land widely among the people was clearly in line with Catholic teaching. The magazine recommended that Catholics should give "active support" to the bill.<sup>58</sup>

Many Catholics supported the agricultural policies of

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<sup>56</sup>Commonweal, April 26, 1935, pp. 719-20.

<sup>57</sup>Cited favorably by The Catholic Messenger, May 2, 1935, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup>Interracial Review, VIII (May, 1935), 68.

the New Deal in 1935 because these policies seemed to agree with the Church's teaching on the benefits of the family farm and on wide distribution of land. While many regretted the tight crop control and destruction of surplus, they also realized that it was impossible for the home market to absorb production. Some agreed with F. P. Kenkel, editor of Central-Blatt and Social Justice, who said,

We are living in a new world; we must take into account the economic dislocation the world has experienced and the need for economic reorientation, such as many nations have been repeatedly forced in the course of centuries to adapt themselves to.<sup>59</sup>

During 1936, the year in which the AAA was struck down by the courts, Father Ryan and Father Schmiedeler continued to support the New Deal agrarian measures. Father Ryan was appointed by President Roosevelt to a special committee on farm tenancy. The President wrote to Ryan outlining his hopes of "developing a land tenure system which will bring an increased measure of security, opportunity, and well-being to the great group of present and prospective farm tenants." Ryan replied by expressing his great interest in the problem and his hope for corrective legislation.<sup>60</sup> At

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<sup>59</sup>Central-Blatt and Social Justice, XXVIII (April, 1935), p. 7.

<sup>60</sup>Catholic Action, December, 1936, p. 16.



the same time, Father Schmiedeler was urging farmers to cooperate with and support both rural resettlement and rural electrification. But Schmiedeler realized that the cure of the agricultural problem was inexorably bound up with the industrial problem. Indeed, he felt that both areas demanded the same remedy--"the organization of society into occupation groups, . . . a minimum of active help on the part of the government, . . . the moral reformation of the individual." These ideas were based largely on the philosophy expressed in Quadragesimo Anno.<sup>61</sup>

At the annual meeting of the Catholic Rural Life Conference in Fargo, North Dakota, on October 10-14, 1936, Schmiedeler again urged close cooperation with and support for various New Deal agricultural agencies. He ended his remarks by specifically calling attention to the Bankhead-Jones bill which he felt deserved the support of the Conference.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Rev. E. Schmiedeler, "Concern of the Encyclicals for Welfare of Agriculture," Catholic Action, May, 1936, p. 12 and August, 1936, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., November, 1936, p. 24.

## CHAPTER VII

### N. R. A. AND AMERICAN CATHOLICS

To cope with the problems of industrial recession, the Roosevelt administration fashioned the National Industrial Recovery Act, passed on June 16, 1933. A polyglot measure based on self-regulation of industry, the act created the National Recovery Administration, which was to supervise the drawing of codes to govern each industrial and trade association. These codes were to regulate all phases of an industry's operation, from production to market. Federal courts could issue injunctions against violators of the codes. As NRA administrator, Roosevelt chose General Hugh S. Johnson.

Across the United States Catholics reacted with genuine enthusiasm to NRA. The hierarchy set a tone of praise which was echoed by Catholic periodicals, newspapers, religious organizations, and finally by influential individuals.

Many members of the Eastern hierarchy made public statements in favor of NRA. Cardinal O'Connell of Boston, the first churchman in America by seniority, gave his full

backing to NRA by declaring that, in order to push the President's plan, August 27, 1933, would be observed as "Rally Sunday" in every Catholic Church in the Boston Archdiocese. He directed the parish priests to enlist the support of their parishioners for the "Blue Eagle." The Cardinal also wrote a personal letter to Victor M. Cutting, chairman of the NRA for the Boston area, pledging his full cooperation with an endeavor which he felt closely resembled the plan outlined in the Papal encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI. O'Connell also promised to urge his people to patronize stores which displayed the "Blue Eagle" sign.<sup>1</sup>

Joining in Cardinal O'Connell's sentiments was Cardinal Hayes of New York, who issued a statement that FDR had instituted NRA "to banish the want of recent years and to insure wider employment." The Cardinal went on to say that, "because the welfare of the entire country is involved, the National Recovery Act merits the unqualified and wholehearted support of every American."<sup>2</sup> In Brooklyn, Bishop Thomas E. Molloy followed Cardinal Hayes' lead. On September 11, 1933, in an address to religious teachers of his diocese,

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<sup>1</sup>The Boston Pilot, August 26, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Commonweal, September 29, 1933, p. 499.

Molloy called NRA "one of the greatest acts toward the restoration of the economic well-being of a sorely tried people."<sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere in the East, the response was equally enthusiastic. In northern New York, Bishop John A. Duffy of Syracuse went even further than Cardinal Hayes in support of NRA. In an interview the Bishop said that FDR "has put into effect the principle announced by Pope Leo XIII forty-odd years ago, that government has not only the right but the duty to assist in the formation of economic units." He called NRA the most Christian-like plan of recovery yet devised.<sup>4</sup> Finally, John J. Milan, Bishop of Hartford, Connecticut, also made a public statement urging support of NRA.<sup>5</sup>

In the Middle West, the Catholic hierarchy preached the same theme of full cooperation for, and support of, the NRA. Archbishop John T. McNicholas of Cincinnati sent a pastoral letter to his flock urging them to buy from the "Blue Eagle." He wrote to Charles F. Williams, local

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<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Columbia, October, 1933, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>NCWC News Service, August 11, 1933; see also The Catholic Transcript, August 17, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>NCWC News Service, September 15, 1933.

director of NRA, and pledged the support of the Church.<sup>6</sup> One year later the Bishop's ardor had not cooled. He admitted there were weak spots in the NRA but felt these were inherent in such an experiment. He prayed that the "old order" would never return, called for local responsibility as the key to success for NRA, and hoped it could be preserved in improved form.<sup>7</sup>

Other Mid-western bishops who supported NRA in public statements included Bishop Joseph Schlarman of Peoria, Illinois; Archbishop Samuel A. Stritch of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Archbishop John J. Glennon of Erie, Pennsylvania; Bishop James A. Griffin of Springfield, Illinois. Schlarman called NRA the "Industrial Charter of 1933" and compared it to the Magna Charta of 13th-century England, because it broke the privileged chains of capitalism. He felt the measure would prepare "the way for a better social order."<sup>8</sup> Griffin, speaking at the installation of Ralph L. Hayes as Bishop of Helena, Montana, said: "The NRA does not go as far as Pope

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<sup>6</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, August 26, 1933, p. 1 and October 14, 1933, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Speech of Archbishop John T. McNicholas, NCCC Proceedings, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 10, 1934, pp. 65-66.

<sup>8</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, September 9, 1933, p. 10.

Pius XI leads in his encyclical . . . but the NRA is an effort to do for the American people what the Catholic Guilds did for the people of the Middle Ages." While lamenting the fact that Catholic social teaching was so neglected in the United States, the Bishop ended with: "Thank God our God-sent President Roosevelt has studied the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI." He felt that the NRA reflected this study in its rejection of rugged individualism and adoption of the spirit of cooperation.<sup>9</sup>

Further west, American bishops expounded the same theme as did their Eastern colleagues--full support of NRA as the incarnation of the Papal encyclicals. Among the Western bishops expressing public support for NRA were Francis Johannes of Leavenworth, Kansas; Bernard Mahoney of Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Philip G. Scher of Monterey-Fresno, California; and Daniel J. Geroke, of Tucson, Arizona.<sup>10</sup> Bishop Johannes said that NRA was an attempt to "reconstruct the social order largely along the lines advocated in the great encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and . . .

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<sup>9</sup>NCWC News Service, Helena, Montana, October 5, 1933.

<sup>10</sup>The Catholic Transcript, October 5, 1933, p. 1; NCWC News Service, September 16 and 30, and October 5, 1933; clipping of Michigan Catholic, September 28, 1933, in Sel. Mat.

Pius XI."<sup>11</sup> Bishop Scher also supported NRA because "in its broad outlines it follows the principles laid down by . . . Leo XIII and Pius XI on industrial relations." He urged his priests to promote cooperation with the "Blue Eagle," because it was aimed at "curbing greed, eliminating sweatshops," and at eliminating "that national disgrace, child labor."<sup>12</sup> Following the script, Bishop Geroke expressed full confidence in President Roosevelt and called NRA a wonderful opportunity to spread the economic program of the Papal encyclicals. He requested his parish priests to devote a Sunday sermon to NRA and to set up local committees to cooperate.<sup>13</sup> At the same time Bishop Mahoney felt sure that President Roosevelt's approach to the depression would be successful.<sup>14</sup>

Editorial opinion in the Catholic press was also heavily weighted in favor of NRA. Many diocesan papers simply printed the "canned" editorials sent out by the NCWC News Service which reflected the bishops' idea that NRA was

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<sup>11</sup>Quoted in NCWC News Service, Leavenworth, Kansas, September 30, 1933.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted in The Brooklyn Tablet, September 23, 1933, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup>NCWC News Service, Tucson, Arizona, September 15, 1933.

<sup>14</sup>Clipping of The Michigan Catholic, September 28, 1933, in Sel. Mat.

the embodiment of Catholic social teaching.<sup>15</sup> The editor of Extension magazine expressed grave doubts about the principles of NRA but concluded by saying, "Let us brush aside whatever doubts and misgivings we may have, and repose our faith, our hope and confidence, in the one man the nation has chosen as its leader. . . ."<sup>16</sup> The Catholic Telegraph of Cincinnati called the critics of NRA the same "money-changers and industrial barons whose greed and selfishness have been the main causes of the depression."<sup>17</sup> The Milwaukee Catholic Herald cited favorably an article which had appeared in L'Illustrazione Vaticana stressing the great similarity between the NRA and the Papal encyclicals.<sup>18</sup> The Brooklyn Tablet urged Roman Catholics to buy from stores displaying the "Blue Eagle" emblem.<sup>19</sup> Many Catholic papers relied heavily on the comments of Father John Ryan for their interpretation of NRA, who always stressed the fact that the

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<sup>15</sup>Commonweal remarked that "so far as we are aware, the whole weight of the Catholic press has been thrown to the President." See August 11, 1933, p. 355.

<sup>16</sup>September, 1933, p. 20.

<sup>17</sup>November 30, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup>June 14, 1934, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup>November 4, 1933, p. 8.



measure was in harmony with the principles of Quadragesimo Anno.

Many Catholic organizations and lay groups supported the President's recovery program. The two major lay affiliates of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the National Council of Catholic Men and the National Council of Catholic Women, were enthusiastic in their support of NRA. At its annual convention in St. Paul, Minnesota, on October 7-11, 1933, the NCCW passed a resolution expressing "joy and satisfaction" at the achievements of NRA and "pledging fullest support and cooperation to the government, to the end that social justice be established throughout the land."<sup>20</sup> Ten days later their male counterparts, the NCCM, met in annual convention in Chicago and passed a similar resolution. The NCCM noted that the crisis in the United States was the result of a neglect of Christian social justice and that the NRA was an attempt to reassert this justice. Because NRA conformed "in part" with Catholic teaching, the NCCM pledged support and urged "upon all Catholics, employers and wage earners alike, active cooperation in accomplishing the success of the act."<sup>21</sup> Such public support did not go unrecognized by the

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<sup>20</sup>Quoted in Catholic Action, November, 1933, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

Federal government. Louis J. Alber, chief of the Speakers Division of NRA, wrote Very Reverend Doctor John J. Burke, general secretary of NCWC, that the latter's organization and its affiliates were giving the NRA "splendid cooperation."<sup>22</sup>

Another powerful organization of Catholic laymen, the Knights of Columbus, also threw its support behind NRA. At their annual convention in Chicago, August 15-17, 1933, the Knights heard their Supreme Secretary, William J. McGinley, move that the organization take a pledge to cooperate and support President Roosevelt in carrying out the plans of NRA. The motion was seconded by Mayor Edward Kelly of Chicago and was passed by the convention amid numerous speeches praising Roosevelt's leadership as "unparalleled and courageous."<sup>23</sup>

Local chapters of the Knights also swung their weight behind the President. The editor of the Knights of Columbus Journal, Philadelphia chapter, praised the concern of the New Deal with insuring a living wage to labor. The paper rejected the charge that NRA was "regimentation," pointing out that

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<sup>22</sup>Catholic Action, October, 1933, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup>Columbia, October, 1933, p. 10.

the government must act vigorously or face revolution.<sup>24</sup> In Augusta, Georgia, the local Knights sponsored a radio speech by the Reverend Harold J. Barr, who drew parallels between NRA and the encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI. Barr said that Catholics should support a plan so obviously patterned after the encyclicals. "There is no group of citizens more confident of the success of the NRA or more enthusiastic about its possibilities than we Catholics," he went on, "for there is none more convinced of the soundness of the principles upon which it is based."<sup>25</sup>

Another important source of support for NRA was the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems. This organization was started early in the 1920's by the NCWC as an attempt to bring Catholic principles to bear on society at the diocesan level under the auspices of the local bishop. Regional conferences were held under the auspices of this organization and nationally known speakers were supplied by NCWC. During the depression these regional conferences

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<sup>24</sup>Clipping Knights of Columbus Journal, September, 1933, Official File, 28, Roosevelt Papers; the Roosevelt Papers contain many copies of resolutions pledging support from local chapters of the Knights of Columbus throughout the United States.

<sup>25</sup>Quoted in NCWC News Service, August 11, 1933.

adopted a radical outlook on what should be done to save the country. Reverend John Ryan, Reverend Raymond A. McGowan, and other reformers usually held the spotlight. All during the depression these conferences called for national action to combat the crisis. It was only natural that they should support the NRA.<sup>26</sup> To cite one instance, Arthur D. Maguire, chairman of the Detroit regional meeting of the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems, held December 4-5, 1933, was happy to write to the White House that

. . . the whole trend of the conference was favorable to NRA, and this moral support of the President and his policies, and the publicity given to this support has had a tremendous and beneficial effect . . . throughout the country.<sup>27</sup>

The NRA even evoked support among Catholic college students. A college convention of members of the "Sodality of Our Lady," representing some seventy-five colleges and universities, and totaling over 500 delegates, did not think it out of place at their meeting to comment on current affairs. The students, who praised President Roosevelt as "a leader who is employing Christian principles in government," passed resolutions supporting NRA, old age pensions,

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<sup>26</sup>Broderick, Right Reverend, p. 200.

<sup>27</sup>Arthur D. Maguire to Marvin McIntyre, December 7, 1933, in Reel 1, Sel. Mat.

abolition of child labor, and unemployment insurance.<sup>28</sup>

This organizational support for Roosevelt's industrial recovery program was augmented by the efforts of many distinguished individual Catholics, whose public support could only enhance the attractiveness of the plan to their co-religious. NRA was, of course, supported by the social reformers connected with the NCWC. Father Ryan went about the country making speeches in which he praised NRA, presented its major features in laymen's terms, and dispelled many fears.<sup>29</sup> Ryan's colleague and assistant in the Social Action Department of NCWC, Reverend Raymond A. McGowan, wrote and spoke to the same effect. He declared NRA to be "in line with the program of Catholic Action" and pointed out that Catholics were "proud" of the similarity.<sup>30</sup> Reverend Doctor Francis J. Haas, who was working for NRA, called the principles behind the program correct in their approach. Haas spoke along these lines before a mass meeting of the

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<sup>28</sup>NCWC News Service, July 10, 1934.

<sup>29</sup>Washington I. Cleveland to Father Ryan, October 26, 1933; Father Ryan to Rev. P. H. Burkett, S.J., November 28, 1933, Ryan papers.

<sup>30</sup>Rev. Raymond A. McGowan, "Legislative Trends and Effects on Industrial Life," NCCC Proceedings, New York City, October 1-4, 1933, p. 561.

Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. At a later date he also urged American Negroes to support NRA because it offered better conditions for all labor.<sup>31</sup>

Other distinguished leaders of American Catholicism also supported NRA. At South Bend, Indiana, Reverend John P. O'Hara, acting president of Notre Dame, came to the defense of NRA after it had been attacked by the United States Chamber of Commerce. O'Hara pointed out that business could not go its merry way unregulated, for that policy had produced the depression. "There must be invoked a power that will free business from its own defiance of economic and moral laws," he added.<sup>32</sup> Mary G. Hawks, president of the NCCW, addressed the 13th annual convention of that organization on the duty of Catholics to support NRA. She urged the NCCW to use its far-flung organization to explain the provisions of NRA and to invite cooperation with the "Blue Eagle."<sup>33</sup> At the same time, members of the Commonwealth Club of California heard Roy A. Bronson, vice-president of the National Catholic

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<sup>31</sup>NCWC News Service, Troy, New York., May 3, 1935; The Brooklyn Tablet, September 16, 1933, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup>Quoted in The Catholic Transcript, November 30, 1933.

<sup>33</sup>Mary G. Hawks, "The Catholic Duty in the Present Crisis," Catholic Action, October, 1933, p. 7.

Alumni Federation, say that the philosophy behind NRA was the same as that behind Quadragesimo Anno.<sup>34</sup>

Among the prominent Catholic laymen who took a hand in evoking Catholic support for NRA was the Postmaster General of the United States and prominent Knight of Columbus, James A. Farley. Farley, speaking to the annual convention of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, called NRA a great success which had already justified its existence.<sup>35</sup> Another layman, John E. Morris, former president of the Catholic Laymen's Retreat Association, wrote an article in which he said that NRA was both Catholic and constitutional in principle.<sup>36</sup>

Members of the clergy across the country expressed a deep commitment to the industrial recovery program. Reverend Doctor Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., vice-president of Georgetown University, spoke over the radio and called NRA the last stand of democracy in the United States. Father Walsh, who led the Catholic opposition to FDR's plan to recognize

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<sup>34</sup>NCWC News Service, San Francisco, California, August 10, 1933; see also The Catholic Transcript, August 10, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup>NCCC Proceedings, New York City, October 1-4, 1933, pp. 94-100.

<sup>36</sup>The Monitor, February 10, 1934, p. 1.

Russia, felt that it was the public duty of all citizens to support NRA.<sup>37</sup> Reverend Jones I. Corrigan, speaking from a Boston radio station, called NRA "the most progressive and skillfully devised plan for national recovery enacted in any nation."<sup>38</sup> In Denver, participants in the annual Catholic Action Week, March 11-17, heard Right Reverend Monsignor William O'Ryan praise FDR as one who would lead the nation out of the present crisis and compare NRA with the Papal encyclicals.<sup>39</sup> In Chicago, radio listeners heard Reverend J. W. L. Maguire attack the Chicago Tribune and the Daily News for their attempts to "blackjack the NIRA."<sup>40</sup>

From the foregoing, it seems clear that the NRA had strong support among American Catholics. Less clear, however, are the reasons for this support. Certainly, in seeking motives, one should give much weight to the very

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<sup>37</sup>Quoted in The Brooklyn Tablet, November 18, 1933, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup>Quoted in The Boston Pilot, October 21, 1933, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup>Catholic Action, April, 1934, p. 19.

<sup>40</sup>Rev. J. W. L. Maguire, "Blackjacking the NIRA," November 8, 1933, Box 88, Frank P. Walsh Papers. Considerable additional evidence of "grass-roots" Catholic support for Roosevelt exists in the form of telegrams and letters from pastors of small parishes in such places as Fort Smith, Arkansas; Bridgeville, Pennsylvania; Aurora, Illinois; and Grand Rapids, Michigan; see Sel. Mat.



desperation of the times. Many people were willing to accept any scheme which gave hope of ending the depression. It is conceivable that Catholics would have been just as sympathetic to a program radically different from NRA. Another motive to be considered, and one which was expressed at the time, was the fact that there was really no alternative to NRA except a return to the "devil take-the-hindmost, every-man-for-himself type of industrialism, the failure of which has brought the nation to its present frightful condition."<sup>41</sup>

Yet as Catholic thinkers appraised the NRA in more depth, certain other themes seemed to predominate their interpretation. There were those who liked the plan on its own terms. Others saw in it a recognition of Catholic social teaching, some feeling that the proposal was based squarely on the Papal encyclicals.

In August, 1933, the National Catholic Alumni Federation passed a resolution in which they heartily endorsed the NRA's plan to set up trade associations and to organize the economy. They did stress, however, that labor, the consumer, and the government should share in controlling these

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<sup>41</sup>Commonweal, August 4, 1933, p. 335.

associations with business. The Federation did not favor a system promoting monopoly unless concrete gains for all society were forthcoming.<sup>42</sup>

Visitors to the Catholic Industrial Conference held in Detroit during December, 1933, were surprised to hear Reverend Frederic Siedenburg, ex-dean of Detroit University, praise President Roosevelt as "still a champion of capitalism." Reverend Siedenburg felt that NRA revealed Roosevelt as a man trying to "control and humanize" capitalism to meet the needs of the people during the depression. To this priest, NRA represented a conservative attempt to save capitalism from failure and real regimentation. This same idea--that the NRA was an attempt to help capitalism rid itself of its vices--was also expressed by William F. Montavon, Secretary of the Legal Division of NCWC.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, in Boston, Reverend Jones I. Corrigan, S.J., was telling his radio audience on the Catholic Truth Hour that NRA was good because it prevented ruinous competition.

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<sup>42</sup>National Catholic Alumni Federation, "A Program of Social Justice," The Catholic Mind, XXXI (August 8, 1933), 281-88.

<sup>43</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, December 16, 1933, p. 4; William F. Montavon, "73rd Congress," Catholic Action, August, 1933, pp. 7-10.

Regulated cooperation had replaced competition in industry; and the results, felt Corrigan, would be more economic stability and fuller employment. Both labor and capital would benefit from NRA because "it will remove the ruthless antagonism between them." Corrigan concluded that "the only way that men can be set free is by imposing restraints on the abuse of freedom," and he felt that "the Recovery Act must be read in the light of this principle."<sup>44</sup> The editor of The Catholic World applauded the ideas expressed by Corrigan and went further in condemning capitalism. The Roman Catholic Church, insisted this editor, has a "definite socialistic bias," and no one should try to lay the albatross of capitalism on the Church's shoulders. "If the National Recovery Act means anything," wrote the editor, "it is an announcement to the world that in the U. S. . . . unregulated competition is henceforth taboo."<sup>45</sup> Another commentator insisted that NRA "must succeed and shall." The emphasis on industrial codes in NRA was viewed as "hastening the day when we shall see a new spirit of social justice in accord with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical on labor and Pope Pius XI's

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<sup>44</sup>Quoted in The Boston Pilot, October 21, 1933, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup>The Catholic World, CXXXVIII (October, 1933), 1, 3.

encyclical on the reconstruction of the social order."<sup>46</sup>

As already indicated, a theme stressed by a large number of commentators was the NRA's attempt to apply the Papal social encyclicals to the American depression. Reverend Francis J. Haas felt that NRA was "a start" in applying the remedy of Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno to the crisis.<sup>47</sup> Michale O'Schaunessy, in his Social Justice Bulletin, remarked that the encyclicals of Pius XI "had a determining influence on the President and his advisors, in formulating the measures being taken. . . ." The St. Francis Home Journal of Pittsburgh also expressed the idea that NRA meant the government had finally recognized the wisdom of Catholic social principles.<sup>48</sup> According to the Jesuit weekly America, NRA recognized the "excellence" of the ideas of Leo XIII and Pius XI. The editor pointed out that for years Catholic social teaching had been ignored in America, but now, suddenly, both Catholics and non-Catholics were turning to these principles. He concluded that "the

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<sup>46</sup>Pax, September, 1933, p. 199.

<sup>47</sup>Catholic Action, May, 1935, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup>Clipping of Social Justice Bulletin, No. 8 [n.d.]; St. Francis Home Journal [n.d.], in Official File, 76-B, Box 4, Roosevelt Papers.

scene has been set for the recognition of many of its [Quadragesimo Anno] principles by the new American administration."<sup>49</sup>

These superficial comments linking NRA with the Papal encyclicals received considerable support in more scholarly analyses. Reverend R. A. McGowan of NCWC set out to test the particular aspects of NRA against Catholic teaching. First, seeking points of similarity between NRA and the Pope's program, McGowan noted that both schemes defended the idea that government should act to relieve the country of economic disaster. That is, both rejected the laissez-faire theory of the state and would substitute industrial order in place of unlimited competition. Both plans condemned the old system of cut-throat competition and disregard of the common good. Likewise, the idea that industrial groups should be formed and directed by the government was a common goal.<sup>50</sup> Father McGowan also pointed to the similar approach to labor by the Papacy and by Roosevelt. The NRA, in Section 7a, recognized labor's right to organize and bargain collectively.

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<sup>49</sup>America, September 16, 1933, p. 553; September 23, 1933, p. 278.

<sup>50</sup>NCWC News Service, Denver, March 23, 1934; Rev. R. A. McGowan, "Testing the NRA by Catholic Teaching-I," Catholic Action, October, 1933, p. 23.

These same rights were stressed in Quadragesimo Anno.<sup>51</sup>

There was a congruence also in that both the Pope and the President advocated a minimum wage and maximum hour law for labor.<sup>52</sup>

Father John Ryan also saw points of similarity between NRA and the Pope's plan. For one thing, Ryan felt that the system of industrial codes being drawn up, forming what Roosevelt called modern guilds, were quite similar to the "vocational groups" called for in Quadragesimo Anno.<sup>53</sup> Ryan felt that "in so far as all the participants in each industry are brought under a code of fair practice and in so far as each association exercises a considerable measure of industrial self-government," there was a convergence of intent between Quadragesimo Anno and NRA.<sup>54</sup>

A student of Catholic social thought has remarked that few Catholic leaders denied "the NRA's resemblance, superficially at least," to the vocational group system

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<sup>51</sup>Rev. R. A. McGowan, "The National Industrial Recovery Act," Catholic Action, July, 1933, p. 6.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>53</sup>Father Ryan to Rev. P. J. Connelly, S.J., June 30, 1933, Ryan Papers.

<sup>54</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan, "Pope Pius XI and a New Social Order," Catholic Action, June, 1934, pp. 14, 15.

outlined in the Pope's encyclical.<sup>55</sup> Certainly the remarks of Reverend Francis J. Haas and Reverend John LaFarge help to substantiate this observation. Haas saw NRA as "essentially a bargain" between government and employers, in which the latter received immunity from antitrust and price-fixing laws in return for accepting the government's ideas on minimum wages and maximum hours. The idea of a worker-employer-government partnership was, he felt, in close harmony with the theme of Quadragesimo Anno.<sup>56</sup> LaFarge was especially interested in the similarity between the Pope's call for the formation of "vocational groups" and the President's desire that the codes form "modern guilds." He also pointed out that both the Pope and the President called for a minimum wage for labor.<sup>57</sup>

According to The Brooklyn Tablet, there were three areas in which NRA ran parallel to the Papal encyclicals. The President's insistence that the formation and cooperation of industrial groups was fundamental to recovery found an echo in Quadragesimo Anno that "the aim of social legislation

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<sup>55</sup>Abell, American Catholicism, p. 248.

<sup>56</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, August 5, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup>Rev. John LaFarge, S.J., "Doing the Truth," Inter-racial Review, VI (August, 1933), 151.

must be the re-establishment of occupational groups."

Secondly, both NRA and the Papal encyclicals stressed the fact that membership in these groups or guilds should be strictly voluntary. Finally, the Pope's emphasis on the need for a living wage for labor had received due consideration in Section 7a of NRA. It seemed clear that FDR had patented NRA after principles he had quoted from Quadragesimo Anno in his Detroit speech during the election campaign. The editor concluded that NRA "deserves the hearty endorsement and loyal support of all Catholics."<sup>58</sup>

Other Catholic newspapers joined the chorus linking NRA with the Papal encyclicals. The Catholic Messenger told its readers that NRA would not destroy individualism but only curb its excesses. Both the Pope and the President, through NRA, wanted industry and labor to cooperate to produce a better standard of living for society.<sup>59</sup> While admitting that the NRA was "not entirely parallel" with Quadragesimo Anno, the Denver Catholic Register did comment on the "remarkable similarity" in the two programs. The Pope called for the control of business and industry for promotion of the

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<sup>58</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, June 24, 1933, p. 8.

<sup>59</sup>The Catholic Messenger, June 22, 1933, p. 2.



common good, and this was also the guiding spirit of NRA.<sup>60</sup>

The editor of this paper was so convinced of the soundness of NRA that he even criticized Al Smith when that Catholic hero came out against the measure. Smith thought that government control of industry was a dangerous trend, thereby disagreeing with Pope Pius XI who wrote that "free competition and still more economic domination must be kept within just and definite limits, and must be brought under the effective control of the public authority. . . ."<sup>61</sup>

Rather than being dangerous, NRA was, said the Denver editor, in many ways parallel to the Pope's program. Both Roosevelt and Pius would protect private property while at the same time trying to distribute the goods of the earth more equally.<sup>62</sup> Finally, in Washington, the NCWC News Service spread the word that

. . . under the direction of General Hugh Johnson  
. . . the far-reaching experiment of molding  
national economic policy to social requirements,  
foreshadowed in the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII  
and his successors, is gradually being put to the  
test.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Denver Catholic Register, May 2, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup>Quoted in ibid., August 10, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>NCWC News Service, June 19, 1933.

A few perceptive prelates even argued that the Papal program was more radical than President Roosevelt's scheme. The most pronounced difference, which was pointed out by Father Ryan and Father McGowan, and others, was that the NRA did not provide for as much active participation by labor as Pius XI desired. Labor was not given an active role in constructing and executing the various industrial codes; and the fact that business was not interpreting Section 7a of the law as permitting the closed union shop meant that labor's right to organize and bargain collectively was jeopardized. This also meant there was little hope of achieving, under NRA, Pius's goal of labor sharing ownership with the employer.<sup>64</sup> While both the President's and the Pope's program sought increased purchasing power for the masses, NRA would rely on high wages to achieve this, while Pius asked for profit-sharing and a wider ownership of property to gain the same result.<sup>65</sup> Another discrepancy, which made clear the Pope's

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<sup>64</sup>All of the following argued that the Pope was more radical than FDR: Rev. John A. Ryan, "Pope Pius," pp. 14, 15; Rev. Joseph F. Thorning, S.J., "Principles and Practices of NRA," The Catholic Mind, XXXII (October 8, 1934), 361-68; Rev. R. A. McGowan, "The National Industrial Recovery Act," p. 13; Rev. John A. Ryan, Social Doctrine, p. 249.

<sup>65</sup>Rev. R. A. McGowan, "Testing the NRA by Catholic Teaching-II," Catholic Action, November, 1933, pp. 28-29.

plan was more radical than NRA, was that the occupational groups called for in the encyclical posited a much closer association of labor and management than that provided for under the industrial codes of FDR's plan.<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps the most cogent presentation of the differences between NRA and the Papal plan was that given by Father McGowan, who found three major areas of divergence. First, in NRA only employers directed an industry while labor remained "an outside bargaining body." In the Pope's plan for vocational groups, all aspects of industry were in joint control. Secondly, under NRA "each industry stands separate from every other industry" and from the government. The vision of the encyclical was the joining together of all industry to promote the common good, "separate, but not independent of, government." Thirdly, in the encyclical all occupations and professions, including agriculture, were considered groups to be organized, whereas NRA was interested only in urban industry, banking, and trade.<sup>67</sup>

Admitting these deficiencies in NRA, Ryan and McGowan,

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<sup>66</sup>Address of Father John Ryan before Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems, Detroit, in New York Times, December 5, 1933, p. 8; America, March 17, 1934, p. 557.

<sup>67</sup>Rev. R. A. McGowan, "Testing NRA by Catholic Teaching-III," Catholic Action, January, 1934, pp. 12, 31.

who were the two most consistent students of the act, still saw it as a progressive piece of legislation. While the minimum wage might be too low, it was still established as a principle. While cooperation of all elements of the economy could have been closer, NRA was still the first step toward a more rational national planning of the economy. While labor could have had more power allotted to it, still the right to organize and bargain collectively was on the statute books even if weakened by the open-shop interpretation of Section 7a. Both Ryan and McGowan were optimistic about NRA. Ryan felt that it could easily evolve "into the kind of industrial order recommended by Pope Pius XI."<sup>68</sup> McGowan likewise viewed NRA as a first step "towards the social order of 'vocational groups,' . . . of Guilds, which the encyclical of Pius XI advocates. . . ."<sup>69</sup> Clearly, to many Catholic social thinkers NRA marked the beginning of a period of fulfillment for the Church's social teaching in the United States.

As usual, however, there was a vocal minority in the Church who took a more critical view. An extreme position

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<sup>68</sup>Ryan, Social Doctrine, p. 249.

<sup>69</sup>McGowan, "Testing NRA-III," p. 11.

was taken by F. P. Kenkel, who labeled NRA as the beginning of "State Socialism." Kenkel lamented the fact that the measure would surely destroy the middle class in America: "It [NRA] gives great power to big companies and will drive the little fellow to the wall." As for the idea that NRA was similar to the guild system advocated by the Popes, Kenkel felt there was little basis for such comparison. The liberals behind NRA looked toward socialism rather than toward any 18th-century guild system for their model.<sup>70</sup>

Another author who disliked NRA was L. S. Herron. Writing in Central-Blatt and Social Justice, Herron remarked that NRA would surely "strengthen the position of capitalistic industry and still further intrench monopoly." The codes gave big business an unfair advantage over small. The NRA, according to Herron, was "essentially the national-planning scheme, seized upon by big business and pushed through Congress in the guise of an emergency measure." Herron felt that NRA was a hinderance to social cooperation and real economic reform because it legalized "the unfair and monopolistic practices of big business. . . ."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>F. P. Kenkel, "New Deals, Past and Present," Central-Blatt and Social Justice, XXVII (July-August, 1934), 112, 117, 241.

<sup>71</sup>L. S. Herron, "Codes Threaten Growth of Cooperation," ibid., XXVI (March, 1934), 385-88.

On the West Coast, disenchantment with NRA was also expressed by The Monitor of San Francisco, whose editor felt that certain Catholics were only fooling themselves by praising NRA as being based on the Papal encyclicals. He pointed out that the Roosevelt plan contained as many parallels with Marxism and Kantism as it did with Catholicism. "The NIRA," he insisted, "can very deftly be turned into an American brand of Communistic state." To this editor, the brain trusters who conceived this bill were advocating an alien philosophy and should be watched carefully.<sup>72</sup>

There were other Catholics who criticized NRA not because they thought it was leading to state socialism but because it was failing in its job. Many recognized that one of the main weaknesses of NRA was the failure of business to live up to the codes. Employers were reluctant to "make any sacrifice at all for the common good. . . ."<sup>73</sup> Others regretted that NRA lacked a "strong set of teeth" with which to force the rugged individualist to conform.<sup>74</sup> In Detroit,

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<sup>72</sup>The Monitor, July 29, 1933, p. 1; August 19, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup>Columbia, November, 1933, p. 13.

<sup>74</sup>The Catholic Herald, March 1, 1934, p. 4.

Father Coughlin agreed that the NRA would fail because only a minority of American industrialists "had honestly subscribed to the codes of NRA."<sup>75</sup> Even pro-NRA men such as McGowan and Ryan insisted that, in order to work properly, NRA had to give more power to labor. Ryan further feared that NRA was "placing too much faith in automatic methods of recovery."<sup>76</sup> The fact that the American Negro had not received much benefit from the act was another short-coming mentioned.<sup>77</sup>

Despite these criticisms, the majority of American Catholics probably agreed with Reverend John Ryan when he praised the program as a step in the right direction. Ryan felt that the only alternatives to NRA were socialism, communism, or fascism. He told his audience at the annual meeting of the NCCC that, by backing the NRA, Catholics had a great opportunity for "putting into effect the Catholic conception of a social order reconstructed upon the

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<sup>75</sup>Morris, "Father Coughlin and the New Deal," p. 29.

<sup>76</sup>Columbia, August, 1933, p. 13; Quoted in New York Times, March 26, 1935, p. 8.

<sup>77</sup>Justin McAghon, "The Negro Under the New Deal," Interracial Review, VIII (March, 1935), 38-39.

principles of social justice."<sup>78</sup>

Public criticism of the NRA reached its apogee with the publication of the Darrow Report in 1934. After many charges by small businessmen that they were being discriminated against because of NRA's tendency to favor monopoly, Roosevelt decided to investigate. In March, 1934, he created the National Recovery Review Board, headed by Clarence Darrow, the famous defense attorney, to study these charges. After a brief investigation, Darrow reported that "giant corporations dominated the NRA code authorities and squeezed small business, labor, and the public."<sup>79</sup>

Catholic reaction to the report was mixed. The Jesuit weekly, America, felt that if the report was correct, the basic purpose of NRA was being defeated. The solutions offered by Darrow, however, would probably lead to even worse results.<sup>80</sup> F. P. Kenkel felt that the Board's findings justified his complaint that NRA was strangling the American middle class.<sup>81</sup> Other Catholics viewed the report with

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<sup>78</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan, "Shall the NRA be Scrapped?" Catholic Action, November, 1934, p. 4.

<sup>79</sup>Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt, p. 67.

<sup>80</sup>America, June 2, 1934, p. 169.

<sup>81</sup>Central-Blatt and Social Justice, May, 1935, p. 48.



skepticism. Some felt that Darrow was exaggerating in order to attract attention, and that such a large undertaking as NRA was bound to "have some rough spots."<sup>82</sup>

The members of the National Catholic Alumni Federation applauded Hugh Johnson who spoke to them on May 31, 1934, denouncing the Darrow Report. Johnson, with his usual exaggeration, said the NRA was the personification of the golden rule in business and called its opponents "scribes and pharisees."<sup>83</sup> When talk arose of forming a small review board to hear the specific complaints of small businessmen, Reverend Maurice S. Sheehy told General Johnson that "since we had the biggest communist and atheist in the country at the head of the other board," it would be wise to put someone like Father Ryan in charge of the new board.<sup>84</sup>

The strong Catholic support for NRA which did exist was not limited to mere written and spoken praise. Many Catholic priests and laymen played an active role in administering the various facets of NRA. The two most prominent of such priests were Reverend Francis J. Haas, Director of the

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<sup>82</sup>Denver Catholic Register, June 3, 1934, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup>Quoted by New York Times, June 1, 1934, p. 6.

<sup>84</sup>Rev. Maurice S. Sheehy to Rev. John A. Ryan, June 28, 1934, Ryan Papers.

National Catholic School of Social Service, and Reverend John A. Ryan. Haas had been asked by Roosevelt to serve on the Labor Advisory Committee of NRA, was later appointed to the National Labor Board, and finally served as Labor Representative on the new General Code Authority of NRA.<sup>85</sup>

Father Ryan played his most active role as one of the three members of the Industrial Appeals Board, formed to hear complaints of small businessmen against NRA. Precipitated by the Darrow Report, the Appeals Board lasted ten months and heard approximately seventy cases. Ryan later remarked that few businessmen claimed discrimination by NRA. Rather, the majority requested "exemptions from compliance with the minimum wage rates" fixed by the codes. Ryan had little sympathy for these petitions. He would prefer to "let the small businessmen perish" rather than reduce wages for thousands of workers.<sup>86</sup>

There were other Catholics who played minor roles in the functioning of industrial reform. Reverend Doctor George Johnson, director of the NCWC Educational Department, was

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<sup>85</sup>The Boston Pilot, October 14, 1933, p. 1; October 13, 1934, p. 1; Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew, p. 216.

<sup>86</sup>Broderick, Right Reverend, pp. 217-18; Ryan, Social Doctrine, pp. 249-50.

appointed to the four-man NRA committee of the American Council of Education. Miss Mary G. Hawks, national president of the NCCW and Mrs. Nicholas F. Brady, distinguished New York Catholic, were members of the Committee for Mobilization for Human Needs and the National Committee for Child Health. Most Reverend Thomas K. Gorman, Bishop of Reno, Nevada, served on a regional recovery board for the rehabilitation of the industrial system. William G. Bruce, prominent Catholic publisher, was named to the Wisconsin State Advisory Board of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works. Right Reverend Monsignor C. J. Donohoe was appointed chairman of the Davenport, Iowa, Adjustment Board of the NRA. Reverend Frederic Siedenburgh was named director of the Detroit Regional Labor Relations Board by President Roosevelt. In the deep South, Reverend Peter M. H. Wynkoven of New Orleans, Louisiana, was chairman of one of the twelve regional United States Labor Boards. Elsewhere in the country, prominent Catholics served on NRA boards and on various labor dispute boards. Altogether, the involvement of American Catholics with the industrial recovery program of the New Deal was extensive.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Catholic Action, January, 1934, p. 13; October, 1933, p. 14; The Brooklyn Tablet, August 12, 1933, p. 1; NCWC News Service, Davenport, July 31, 1934 and Detroit, September 17, 1934; The Catholic Messenger, December 28, 1933, p. 1.

This involvement helps explain the rather keen reaction produced among American Catholics when the NRA was declared invalid by the Supreme Court on May 27, 1935. In 1933, the Legal Committee of the National Catholic Alumni Federation said that NRA was constitutional and would "probably be upheld . . . at least in its broad outlines . . . during the period of emergency."<sup>88</sup> When the measure was struck down by the Court, many Catholics attempted to rationalize the decision. In Chicago, The New World admitted that there was little hope of resurrecting the project because of the unanimity of the decision. Trying to look on the bright side, however, the editor pointed out that NRA had made certain definite gains such as elimination of sweatshops, restricting child labor, and--most important--stirred the people to the possibilities of a better social order. Certainly such a project was not to be condemned because it did not fit the Supreme Court's view of the Constitution. The Constitution was not, the editor insisted, "intended to handicap Americans in the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness, which, in the present instance, means a fearless . . . effort to bring about a better social order." The

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<sup>88</sup>The Catholic Herald, July 20, 1933, p. 4.

Constitution, he concluded, is "the bulwark of our liberties," not "a millstone on our necks."<sup>89</sup> The editor of America was just as disturbed but more optimistic about the decision. He felt that all was not lost by the Court's decision because the NRA had already served a noble purpose. It had educated the people of the United States to the "doctrines of social justice, as preached by Leo XIII and Pius XI," and this gain could not be erased by the Court's action.<sup>90</sup>

Commonweal likewise regretted the passing of NRA and took issue with those who applauded the Court's decision. The editor felt that the industrial codes "were definite achievements" as moving toward "the vertical, cooperative organization of industrial society which alone seems a feasible idea." Yet the magazine admitted that NRA had evolved into "an organic conception, which tended evidently, to blur the edges between private custom and law, administration and legislation."<sup>91</sup> In this same vein The Boston

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<sup>89</sup>The New World, October 5, 1934, p. 4; June 7, 1934, p. 4.

<sup>90</sup>America, June 8, 1935, p. 194.

<sup>91</sup>Commonweal, June 7, 1935, p. 142; June 14, 1935, p. 169.

Pilot felt that the test case before the Court had appeared "too frivolous and unimportant to merit consideration." But the Court's reasoning seemed sound and NRA had served its purpose. It fitted a gap and "established standards that might well be followed by private industry."<sup>92</sup> While applauding the Supreme Court's defense of the Constitution, the Catholic Central Verein warned that it "must not be accepted as a command to return to the old economic system, to the laws of the jungle." Laissez-faire economics was not the answer and a new unique system must be established.<sup>93</sup>

Individual Catholics also spoke out on the Court's decision. Father McGowan regretted both the decision and the Court's tendency toward a strict interpretation of the Constitution. He felt it essential that the Court change its viewpoint "if the federal government . . . [is to do its] duty to the economic welfare of the people." More attention should be paid, said the priest, to the constitutional clause calling on the government to promote the general welfare.<sup>94</sup> In Denver, Hubert A. Smith, editor of the diocesan

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<sup>92</sup>The Boston Pilot, June 8, 1935, p. 4.

<sup>93</sup>Cited by The Catholic Herald, June 6, 1935, p. 4.

<sup>94</sup>Quoted in ibid., June 13, 1935, p. 4.

newspaper, felt the Court's decision was a calamity. He advised the Roosevelt administration to continue the fight by passing a constitutional amendment giving the government the powers outlined in NRA. Smith felt that NRA had prevented revolution in America, but feared what would happen now that it had been declared void.<sup>95</sup> To Reverend James Gillis, editor of The Catholic World, the issue was simple. The removal of NRA meant that all hope of social and economic reform was gone. But, Gillis insisted, "if we don't get reform, we shall get revolution."<sup>96</sup> These sentiments were shared by Father John Ryan. Upon hearing of the invalidation of NRA, Ryan issued a public statement that "some other way must be found . . . to subordinate wealth and business to the common welfare of the country." Ryan feared that, with NRA gone, the standard of living would drop, wages would be cut, and hours would be lengthened.<sup>97</sup>

In order to unite Catholic opinion against any such reactionary trend, Ryan and Father McGowan composed a statement of Catholic principles relevant to the economic crisis.

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<sup>95</sup>Denver Catholic Register, May 30, 1935, p. 1; June 9, 1935, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup>The Catholic World, CXLI (July, 1935), 385-86.

<sup>97</sup>Broderick, Right Reverend, p. 219.

McGowan had been working on such a statement before NRA had been struck down. The text was now revised by Ryan to incorporate this latest development. In its final form the statement, "Organized Social Justice," called for a new NRA, under a constitutional amendment, to include farmers and professional men in a system of "occupational group organizations" providing freedom of economic behavior and collaboration with the Federal government. Any return to the old system or failure to construct a new NRA would mean communism or fascism for the United States. The statement declared that "had NRA been permitted to continue, it could readily have developed into the kind of industrial order recommended by the Holy Father."<sup>98</sup>

Father Ryan worked assiduously to get a cross section of Catholic businessmen and industrialists to sign the statement. Many of his correspondents refused because they feared an increase in the power of the Federal government which would follow a constitutional amendment as suggested in the Ryan statement. Although Ryan's correspondence indicates his discouraging experience, the priest still insisted that at least eighty per cent of those to whom the document was

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<sup>98</sup>Quoted by New York Times, December 5, 1935, p. 28; Broderick, Right Reverend, pp. 220-21.



sent were willing to sign it. Altogether, 131 distinguished Catholics finally signed the manifesto, most of them outspoken liberals. Among the signers, besides McGowan and Ryan, were Frank P. Walsh, Assistant Secretary of Labor, Edward F. McGrady, Reverend Haas, Reverend Gillis, and Dorothy Day, editor of The Catholic Worker. No member of the hierarchy signed. Originally, two bishops, Robert E. Lucey of Amarillo, Texas, and Aloysius J. Muench of Fargo, North Dakota, signed the statement, but their names were blocked out of the published edition in order to avoid embarrassing them by their uniqueness. It seems clear that "Organized Social Justice" failed in its purpose to present a truly representative statement of Catholic social teaching because its support was limited to that element already committed to the New Deal.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Broderick, Right Reverend, p. 221; Clipping of Baltimore Sun, December 5, 1935, in Ryan Papers; Abell, American Catholicism, p. 251.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LABOR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

From what has been written concerning the major provisions of NRA, it should be apparent that for the most part American Catholic spokesmen were pro-labor. This support of labor had historic roots in a Church made up primarily of the lower classes and immigrants. Father Ryan, of course, was a long-time advocate of a "living wage" for labor and had been praised by Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins for his forward-looking ideas. Besides being a public advocate of labor's rights, Ryan was constantly writing fellow priest and laymen on the advantage of good labor legislation.<sup>1</sup>

In his struggle for better labor laws, Ryan was joined by Reverend Francis J. Haas. When this priest was appointed to the Labor Policies Board of the Works Progress

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<sup>1</sup>Ryan, Social Doctrine, p. 279; Bishop Francis C. Kelley of Oklahoma City to Ryan, January 7, 1933; Ryan to Rev. Philip H. Burkett, November 9, 1935, and many other letters in the Ryan Papers.

Administration, many Catholics saw the action as a vindication of the Church's stand for a living wage, for labor's right to organize, and for shorter hours. Haas gave strong support to Secretary of Labor Perkins' program to improving work conditions.<sup>2</sup> He was radical enough to declare it the duty of every worker to join a union and to actively assist Sidney Hillman's attempt to recruit members for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.<sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere, Reverend McGowan of NCWC also praised the work of Secretary Perkins as being in accord with the encyclicals of Pius XI. In 1932, Dorothy Day founded the Catholic Worker Movement in New York City. In 1937, Reverend John P. Monaghan established the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists. Both of these movements were attempts to keep the loyalty of the Catholic laborer who might be attracted by the advantages of Marxism.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Rev. Haas to Hon. Frances Perkins, March 14, 1934, Correspondence-general, 1933, Haas Papers; The Brooklyn Tablet, August 3, 1935, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Rev. Haas to Rev. William C. Keane, Director of Catholic Charities of Albany, New York, May 8, 1934, Haas Papers; Rev. John Ryan to Edward Keating, November 9, 1933, Ryan Papers.

<sup>4</sup>Ellis, American Catholicism, p. 144; Dorothy Day, The Long Loneliness (New York, 1952), p. 219; NCWC News Service, June 29, 1935.

How some Catholics felt about the labor problems facing America during the depression is indicated by their reaction to the 1933 proposal of Senator Hugo Black of Alabama for a thirty-hour work week. The Black bill, which Roosevelt refused to support because he felt it was unconstitutional and negative in its approach, was supported by over one thousand students at Notre Dame University in a petition sent to the House Labor Committee.<sup>5</sup> Father Ryan was enthusiastic in his support of the proposal. He wrote to Frances Perkins in April, 1933, that he was glad it had passed the Senate and felt "it is a good sign for the President's program that this revolutionary measure got through so fast by such a wide margin."<sup>6</sup> He also wrote to Senator Black, remarking that he had made a speech in favor of the thirty-hour week some six months earlier in the Town Hall Meeting in New York City. He referred to the Senator's bill as "able and comprehensive," and was surprised at what a good argument could be made by using the powers in the Interstate Commerce clause to establish minimum hours for labor.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Catholic Action, June, 1933, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan to Hon. Frances Perkins, April 7, 1933, Ryan Papers.

<sup>7</sup>Rev. John Ryan to Senator Hugo L. Black, April 7, 1933, Ryan Papers.

Indeed, Ryan even requested an opportunity to testify in favor of the bill before the House Committee on Labor. He wrote to Congressman W. P. Connery, chairman of the committee, that it was a "great disappointment" when he was denied an opportunity to appear.<sup>8</sup>

Catholic priests took an active part in securing labor's rights under NRA. Ryan's role has already been mentioned. A few of the more prominent prelates who served as mediators in the labor disputes in 1933 and 1934 include: Archbishop Edward J. Hanna, Chairman of the National Longshoreman's Board; Reverend Haas, as Federal mediator in the Minneapolis Truck Driver's strike; and Very Reverend John W. R. Maguire, Chicago Regional Board and mediator in the Kohler Wisconsin strike. Other priests served on local and regional NRA boards--Reverend John O'Grady on the NRA National Sheltered Workshop Committee; Reverend James F. Cunningham, Los Angeles Advisory Board, Dress Code Authority; Monsignor P. M. H. Wynhoven, Chairman of the New Orleans Regional Labor Board; Reverend John P. Boland, Chairman of Buffalo Regional Labor Board; and Reverend Frederick Siedenburg, Chairman of the Detroit Regional Labor Board.

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<sup>8</sup>Rev. John Ryan to Hon. W. P. Connery, May 3, 1933, Ryan Papers.

Not only were Catholics involved in the labor policies of the New Deal, but many even criticized these policies because they were not radical enough. As has been seen, some regretted the negligible part labor had played in formulating the NRA codes. There was also dissatisfaction with the contents of Section 7a. One Catholic spokesman, Ernest F. Dubrul, told the annual meeting of the NCCC in October, 1934, that it was against Catholic teaching to force a man to join a union.<sup>9</sup> But voluntary unionism was not what Father Haas and other Catholic liberals wanted. In fact, Section 7a was criticized by more progressive Catholics precisely because it seemed to support such rights as Dubrul argued were necessary according to the teachings of the Church. One editor felt that labor had been shortchanged by NRA because "this administration does not support, and never did, an interpretation of Section 7a which would have helped labor."<sup>10</sup> Another, who was critical of the collectivist tendencies of NRA, complained that it was setting up company unions and thereby leading to disaster for the working

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<sup>9</sup>Ernest F. Dubrul, "NRA and Collective Bargaining," NCCC Proceedings, Cincinnati, October 7-10, 1934, pp. 287-93.

<sup>10</sup>America, May 11, 1935, p. 97.

man.<sup>11</sup> In Brooklyn an editor expressed fear that the right of collective bargaining spelled out in Section 7a would be undermined by a weak interpretation or by simply ignoring it in practice.<sup>12</sup> Father Haas publicly called for the establishing of independent unions over the company unions. He wrote to William Green, President of the A. F. of L., expressing hope that the administration would not act rashly on the labor provisions of NRA, as this was the "all important matter."<sup>13</sup> Another source felt that Section 7a was too weak because the interpretation of it by government and industry "have been turning collective bargaining and the right to organize into an insulting delusion."<sup>14</sup>

Such Catholic impatience with NRA's labor policy was well founded. It is clear that neither FDR nor other New Dealers like Johnson and Richberg looked upon Section 7a and the NRA as a means of building up industrial unionism in the United States.<sup>15</sup> Yet when NRA was invalidated by the

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<sup>11</sup>The Monitor, September 9, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, September 2, 1933, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., August 26, 1933, p. 1; Rev. Haas to William Green, November 11, 1933, Haas Papers.

<sup>14</sup>America, March 24, 1934, p. 582.

<sup>15</sup>Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt, p. 108.

Supreme Court, Roosevelt was already supporting the Wagner Labor bill.<sup>16</sup> Senator Robert Wagner of New York had been trying to get his bill through Congress since 1934 but had failed to receive administration support. As passed in July, 1935, the act set up a National Labor Relations Board

. . . as a permanent independent agency empowered not only to conduct elections to determine the appropriate bargaining units and agents but to restrain business from committing "unfair labor practices" such as discharging workers for union membership or fostering employer-dominated company unions.<sup>17</sup>

Many Catholics were attracted by the proposals outlined in the Wagner bill. When it was being debated in the Senate Committee on Education and Labor in 1934, the Bishops' Administrative Committee of the NCWC drafted a statement for presentation before this body. The statement was a vigorous defense of labor's right "to organize freely into associations of their own choice." Portions of Pius XI's encyclical Quadragesimo Anno were placed in evidence as favoring the bill. In a letter to David I. Walsh, chairman of the House committee, Reverend John J. Burke, General Secretary

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<sup>16</sup>Burns, Roosevelt, p. 226, points out that FDR supported the Wagner Act before NRA was declared invalid.

<sup>17</sup>Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt, p. 151.



of NCWC, urged that the Bishops' statement be given strong consideration.<sup>18</sup>

The Bishops' statement stressed that the Wagner bill would "protect the worker's right to self-organization." The prelates also liked the idea of establishing an industrial tribunal for "the adjudication of industrial controversies." They remarked that both of these ideas "are in complete accord with and are required by the Catholic social program enunciated by Pope Leo XIII in 1891 and by the present Holy Father, Pope Pius XI in 1931." Labor's right to organize unions and to bargain collectively were "inherent rights." A tribunal of adjudication was necessary to "resolve the conflicting claims" of both labor and management. Anything less would be "chaos and anarchy."<sup>19</sup>

Father Ryan, actively supporting the Wagner bill, felt it was "probably the most just, beneficent, and far-reaching piece of labor legislation ever enacted in the United States."<sup>20</sup> He made public statements endorsing the bill and sent many letters to Congressmen urging their help in its passage. He

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<sup>18</sup>Huber, Our Bishops Speak, p. 305.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Commonweal, April 27, 1934, p. 701.

<sup>20</sup>Quoted in Broderick, Right Reverend, p. 220.

wrote to Senator David I. Walsh, giving his full backing to Wagner's proposals. In this letter, Ryan included a copy of a statement by Reverend John J. Burke and the NCWC's Administrative Council supporting the measure. Ryan himself favored the bill because, like the bishops, he thought it was in accord with the wishes of both Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI. He pointed out that the act was needed to make the NRA codes effective.<sup>21</sup> Ryan's stand was echoed by the Denver Catholic Register, which felt that the bill, if constitutional, would put labor and capital "on somewhat of a level."<sup>22</sup>

A dissident note, however, was raised by the Jesuit weekly, America. The editor of this magazine doubted that the bill could be enforced after the Supreme Court's decision in the Schechter case. If the National Labor Relations Board could not "go into the states, and compel employers to recognize the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively, the Wagner bill is nothing more than a gesture." But such power could not be delegated to the NLRB by Congress under the existing interpretation of the Supreme

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<sup>21</sup>Catholic Action, May, 1935, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup>Denver Catholic Register, June 20, 1935, p. 4.

Court. The Interracial Review, on the other hand, feared that the clause in the bill which provided that a majority vote would decide the exclusive bargaining representatives for any labor unit might be used to exclude the Negro. It was recognized, however, that such a clause was a necessity.<sup>23</sup>

From the foregoing, it would appear that a significant element of the Catholic Church was vigorous in supporting the more radical labor policies of the New Deal. Yet when one approaches the question of child labor, the eradication of which was a goal sought by the New Deal, a striking amount of opposition is revealed on the part of the Church. Federal child labor legislation had begun as early as 1916, with the Keating-Owen Act, but the Supreme Court had seen fit to declare invalid this and subsequent acts. In 1924, a child labor amendment to the Constitution was submitted to the states by Congress, but by 1932 it still lacked the needed support of at least ten states. It was against this amendment that much of the Catholic opposition was directed. The amendment provided, first, that "Congress shall have power to limit, regulate, and prohibit the labor of persons under

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<sup>23</sup>America, July 13, 1935, p. 313; Interracial Review, X (May, 1937), 68.

eighteen years of age"; second, that "the power of the several states is unimpaired by this article except that the operation of state laws shall be suspended to the extent necessary to give effect to legislation enacted by Congress." Altogether it did not seem a radical proposal. Yet Catholic opposition to the measure was widespread.

Reverend Michael J. Ahern, S.J., one of Cardinal O'Connell's bright young men, gave the most elaborate explanation of Catholic opposition. Speaking over the Boston radio, Ahern pointed out that he, of course, did not approve of child labor, but this had nothing to do with Catholic opposition to the amendment. Catholics were opposed to the amendment because it invested too much power in Congress. Because it gave Congress such unlimited power, Catholics thought it "dangerous and un-American." Limitations to the measure had been suggested to Congress before its submission to the states, but all were rejected. Friends of the amendment urged that the people depend upon a reasonable interpretation by Congress. Ahern stressed that "we much prefer to have this reasonableness written into the Constitution, than to have it left to the vagaries of political opinion." As it stood, Congress could use the power granted to "regulate, limit, and even prohibit the

education of these young people." This was not expected, but why not make such things clear in the amendment? "It seems to us," he continued, "that under this amendment as it now stands Congress could regiment all children and youths under eighteen years of age, as they have been regimented in some communistic and fascist countries." The priest went on to note that the amendment had other weaknesses of omission, such as the failure to distinguish between harmful and non-harmful child labor. Furthermore, he insisted, child labor was no longer a major problem and President Roosevelt had already admitted that he needed no amendment to eradicate what was left.<sup>24</sup>

Much of this argument appears fantastic now, but it should be made clear that a number of Catholic bishops and much of the Catholic press expressed opposition to the amendment along the lines mentioned by Ahern. Besides the hierarchy, the Catholic Daughters of America and various local Holy Name Societies also came out against the proposal. The CDA argued that the amendment would "substitute for the authority of the parent, the authority of Congress."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Quoted in The Boston Pilot, February 27, 1937, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup>Quoted in New York Times, February 23, 1936, II, 1; February 8, 1937, p. 5.

In Massachusetts the amendment ran into the opposition of Cardinal O'Connell. The Cardinal's representative at the Massachusetts Legislative Committee dealing with ratification of the amendment, Reverend Jones I. J. Corrigan, surprised his congressional audience by asserting that "nothing redder ever came out of Red Russia" than the amendment in question. He argued that the ratification of the amendment would be to "Russianize American parents and nationalize American children."<sup>26</sup> This remarkable outburst prompted a reply by John J. Cummings of Boston, a Catholic and former legislator, who insisted that the Cardinal was really too old to know what the amendment said. He also pointed to such prominent Catholics as Ryan, Haas, and P. H. Callahan, who favored the amendment, as evidence that it was not communistic in nature.

The Cardinal, however, was to have his way as the Massachusetts legislature failed to ratify the amendment both in 1936 and 1937, despite a personal broadcast plea by President Roosevelt. Roosevelt was assisted in the preparation of his plea by Bishop Frances Spellman of New York, who was a former assistant to Cardinal O'Connell. The

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<sup>26</sup>Quoted in The Boston Pilot, February 23, 1935, p. 1.

Massachusetts action caused Michael Flaherty, secretary of the Boston Painters Union, to charge that the Church obviously must own some sweatshops and that the Cardinal was running the legislature.<sup>27</sup>

Other states also witnessed Catholic opposition to the amendment. In Connecticut, Bishop McAuliffe of Hartford sent a representative to oppose the amendment before the state legislature.<sup>28</sup> In Texas one state senator remarked that ratification of the proposal was being hindered by pressure from the Catholic Church "which has been pouring letters and telegrams into the Senate."<sup>29</sup> At the same time, however, Texas was the home of the most outspoken friend of the child labor amendment in the American hierarchy. Robert E. Lucey, Bishop of Amarillo, did his best to promote ratification. He wrote to the Governor endorsing the latter's stand for the amendment. Lucey also quelled the opposition organized by the state council of the Knights of Columbus.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Robert I. Gannon, The Cardinal Spellman Story (New York, 1962), p. 154; New York Times, February 20, 1937, p. 18.

<sup>28</sup>Columbia, April, 1937, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup>Claude C. Westerfeld to Marvin McIntyre, February 22, 1937, Official File, 58-A, Box 5, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>30</sup>Robert E. Lucey, Bishop of Amarillo, to Frank P. Walsh, January 23, 1937, Box 136, Frank P. Walsh Papers. The Frank Walsh Papers in the New York Public Library are a rich source of information on this whole question.

But the Bishop seems to have been alone among the hierarchy in publicly supporting the amendment.

In New York state the opposition reached its apogee. All eight New York bishops came out in opposition to ratification by the state legislature. Bishop Gibbons of Albany appeared in person before the legislative committee to oppose the amendment. Cardinal Hayes of New York City asserted that "authority over the lives of children rests in their parents" and not in any removed governmental agency. Bishop William Turner of Buffalo also spoke out against the amendment.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout the struggle for ratification, which occurred off and on from 1935 through 1937, President Roosevelt was aware of the opposition of the Catholic Church to the amendment. Charles C. Burlingham wrote to him, asking him to intercede in New York to overcome the hierarchy's resistance.<sup>32</sup> Roosevelt himself remarked to Harold Ickes that the Catholic opposition to the amendment could prove very harmful to the Church because it might provoke

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<sup>31</sup>Commonweal, March 5, 1937, p. 509; Catholic Action, February, 1935, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup>Charles C. Burlingham to President Roosevelt, January 24, 1935, Official File, 58-A, Box 5, Roosevelt Papers.



Protestant reaction.<sup>33</sup> This same thought was expressed by Irving Brant, editor of the St. Louis Star-Times, to Father John Ryan. Brant felt that the hierarchy's action would lead to "a new kind of anti-Catholicism and anti-clericalism." In his reply, Ryan emphasized that only a small minority of bishops were involved in the controversy while most were silent.<sup>34</sup>

President Roosevelt, after being re-elected in 1936, decided to give the amendment his support in New York. He wrote to Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia of New York City, reminding him of the Presidential plea made to the Governors that ratification "be made one of the major items in the legislative program in their states." Roosevelt added, "I sincerely hope that my own state will be among those to ratify."<sup>35</sup> A few days later he wrote the same sort of message to Governor Herbert H. Lehman, trusting "that the assembly will take . . . favorable action as quickly as possible" and that his

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<sup>33</sup>Ickes, Diary, II, 86.

<sup>34</sup>Irving Brant to Rev. John A. Ryan, April 22, 1937, Ryan Papers.

<sup>35</sup>President Roosevelt to Fiorello LaGuardia, telegram, February 4, 1937, in Rosenman, Public Papers, VI, 34.

"own home state will be very prompt in ratification."<sup>36</sup>

In the words of Reverend Wilfrid Parsons, editor of America, the Catholic press was "overwhelmingly against the amendment."<sup>37</sup> The Jesuit weekly did indeed oppose the proposal.<sup>38</sup> Other Catholic sources also came out against it, but none more strongly than The Boston Pilot and The Brooklyn Tablet. The Boston paper supported Cardinal O'Connell's opposition with editorials, pointing out that "it is the solemn duty of [the Cardinal] to safeguard these children from any menace to their sacred and essential inheritance as Americans and as Catholics." The amendment under consideration was "another invasion into the private rights of the individual." The editor regretted the President's support of the measure which so endangered parents' rights over their children.<sup>39</sup> The Brooklyn Tablet opposed the measure for various reasons, one of which was the fear it "would result in new Federal snooping and a million-dollar enforce-

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<sup>36</sup>President Roosevelt to Hon. Herbert H. Lehman, February 22, 1937, in Rosenman, Public Papers, VI, 92.

<sup>37</sup>Rev. Wilfrid Parsons to Mrs. G. F. Zimand [n.d.], copy in Ryan Papers, 1937.

<sup>38</sup>America, March 10, 1934, p. 535.

<sup>39</sup>The Boston Pilot, February 17, 1934, p. 4; January 23, 1937, p. 4; February 27, 1937, p. 6.

ment bureau with all the graft that went with national prohibition." The editor felt the amendment was designed to regiment adolescents and argued that boys fifteen and over should be allowed to work if their family needed the additional income.<sup>40</sup> The official publication of the Knights of Columbus also came out against the proposal because it meant a further encroachment "upon local self-government." The Catholic Central Verein concurred in this judgment that the measure would mean the Federal government would assume more state power.<sup>41</sup>

Against this formidable array of opposition was pitted a group of influential Catholics determined to see the amendment ratified. As might be expected, foremost in this group was Father John Ryan. His early support took the form of letters addressed to members of state legislatures where the amendment was being considered. In this vein, on November 3, 1933, he wrote to W. W. Burke, chairman of the Missouri Child Labor Committee, who had requested the priest's assistance in promoting the passage of the amendment

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<sup>40</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, February 24, 1934, p. 8; December 1, 1934, p. 8; January 19, 1935, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup>Columbia, April, 1935, p. 12; The Boston Pilot, February 17, 1934, p. 4.

in that state. Ryan was glad to write that he supported the amendment and wished it were law.<sup>42</sup> A similar statement went to Victor A. Olander, Secretary of the Illinois State Federation of Labor, who was pushing ratification of the amendment in his state.<sup>43</sup> Ryan sent his endorsement to the Illinois Legislature, as well as to those in Nebraska, Idaho, Massachusetts, and Indiana. In many of his letters Ryan liked to quote the late Senator Thomas J. Walsh of Montana, who had said that the amendment was subjected to "selfish and pernicious propaganda." The priest felt that Catholics had fallen prey to this propaganda and were misguided in their opposition.<sup>44</sup> The fears that Congress would set the minimum age for working at eighteen were, he believed, unfounded. Furthermore, the amendment did not give Congress any exhaustive power in education. Indeed, the states already had more power over children's education than did the

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<sup>42</sup>Father Ryan to W. W. Burke, November 3, 1933, Ryan Papers.

<sup>43</sup>Father Ryan to Hon. James Boyle, June 14, 1933, Ryan Papers.

<sup>44</sup>Francis Downing, "American Catholicism and the Socio-economic Evolution in the United States," in Church and Society: Catholic Social and Political Thought and Movements, 1789-1950, ed. Josephy N. Moody (New York, 1953), p. 875.

Federal government. Why, asked Ryan, were the states so much safer than the Federal government?<sup>45</sup> In all of his correspondence concerning the measure, Father Ryan was careful to point out that the National Catholic Welfare Conference had "taken no formal position either for or against the Federal Child Labor Amendment," but that he personally supported it.<sup>46</sup>

One group dedicated to the ratification of the constitutional amendment, and one attracted by Ryan's statement, was the National Child Labor Committee. The committee secretary, Courtenay Dinwiddie, was very desirous of enlisting some prominent Catholics for his group, in view of the outspoken opposition of some of the bishops. With this in mind he wrote to Reverend Francis Haas asking him for a public statement in favor of the amendment. Haas replied that he was "in complete accord with the stand of the NCLC" and felt that some Catholic criticisms of the amendment were "positively stupid." He regretfully declined, however, to make a public statement in favor of the amendment because he

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<sup>45</sup>Father Ryan to Ethel Van Benthuyssen, January 20, 1934, Ryan Papers.

<sup>46</sup>Father Ryan to Cranston Brenton, August 23, 1935, Ryan Papers.

feared it might "affect my opportunity of service to the National Labor Board."<sup>47</sup>

Sometime later, Dinwiddie tried again. He telephoned to Father Ryan, suggesting that the priest organize a committee of Catholics in favor of ratification. After discussing the matter with Father McGowan, who also favored the amendment, Ryan replied that a committee was a good idea but that it could not be connected with the NCWC or the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems. Furthermore, he would join but could only lend his name to the cause.<sup>48</sup>

While Ryan was reluctant to sponsor such an organization, Frank P. Walsh, New York attorney, was not. On February 17, 1936, Walsh announced the formation of a Catholic Committee for Ratification of the Child Labor Amendment. Walsh made a public statement that he was "especially distressed by the opposition on the part of many Catholics" to the amendment. This opposition was, in Walsh's opinion, "influential in blocking the ratification of the amendment in

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<sup>47</sup>Rev. Francis Haas to Courtenay Dinwiddie, February 12, 1934, Correspondence-general, 1934, Haas Papers.

<sup>48</sup>Father Ryan to Courtenay Dinwiddie, November 5, 1935, Ryan Papers.

certain of the state legislatures."<sup>49</sup> He went on to stress that his committee felt the amendment was necessary for the elimination of child labor in the United States. He listed as charter members such prominent Catholics as Father Ryan, Father McGowan, Reverend J. W. R. Maguire, Professor Carlton J. H. Hayes, Professor David A. McCabe, Grover Whalen, Rose J. McHugh, Dorothy Day, and Theodore A. Thomas.<sup>50</sup> Walsh later added the name of Michael O'Shaughnessy to his list of supporters. O'Shaughnessy was convinced of the need for the amendment by FDR's statement that child labor had increased since the invalidation of NRA. He wrote that "the present evil over shadows the possible evil of congressional interference with education to the detriment of religion."<sup>51</sup>

Naturally the Walsh Committee came in for some criticism from Catholic sources. The Brooklyn Tablet assailed both the leader and the cause for going against the wishes of the hierarchy.<sup>52</sup> The Boston Pilot also felt that

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<sup>49</sup>Quoted in Commonweal, February 28, 1936, p. 495.

<sup>50</sup>New York Times, February 16, 1936, II, 2.

<sup>51</sup>Michael O'Shaughnessy to Frank P. Walsh, January 4, 1937, Box 136, F. P. Walsh Papers. The Walsh papers have two big boxes dealing with the work of this committee.

<sup>52</sup>New York Times, February 17, 1936, p. 19.

Walsh's efforts were misguided and pointed out that ratification was not really a Catholic issue but touched all men who did not want to surrender control over the education of their children to Congress.<sup>53</sup> S. A. Baldus, editor of Extension magazine, criticized the Walsh group because they had failed to consult proper ecclesiastical authority before dragging the Church into politics. This was "at least embarrassing to the official representatives and spokesmen of the Church." He felt that the group should not be supported by Catholics.<sup>54</sup>

This discussion of the debate on the child labor amendment reveals a definite paradox in Catholic labor thought during the first term of President Roosevelt. During Roosevelt's first term, most Catholic spokesmen argued for a wider role for labor under the NRA, and later supported the benefits of the Wagner Labor Relations Act, because they felt that freedom to join a union and collective bargaining were both part of the Papal program. At the same time, however, elements of the hierarchy vigorously opposed the ratification of the amendment. While some Catholics called for a more radical interpretation of NRA to permit

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<sup>53</sup>The Boston Pilot, February 29, 1936, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup>Extension, May, 1936, clipping in Box 136, F. P. Walsh Papers.



the growth of occupational groups, others opposed the child labor amendment because it would mean a decrease in state power. How clergymen, who in 1933 could call for a strong assertion of Federal power in combatting the depression, could only a few months later work against the child labor amendment because they feared that under its provisions this same Federal government would bolshevize their children is a paradox difficult to explain.

If American Catholic opinion on labor had its ambiguous aspects, no such division was evident in its attitude toward social security. The Wagner-Lewis or Social Security Act, signed by President Roosevelt on August 15, 1935, was one of the most important relief measures fostered during the New Deal. As enacted, the law created a cooperative Federal-State system of unemployment compensation. It levied a tax on employers, and authorized grants to the states to finance the administration of unemployment insurance. It provided a tax for old-age and survivor's insurance to be levied in equal amounts upon employers and employees. It further provided cash grants to states to subsidize old-age pensions allowed under state laws and various other forms of relief to the destitute and infirm.

In connection with the administration of the new law,

President Roosevelt addressed a personal letter to the clergymen of America. In this note of September 23, 1935, he stressed that he was "particularly anxious that the new social security legislation . . . shall be carried out in keeping with the high purposes with which this law was enacted." He wanted the clergymen in America to write to him about the conditions in their communities and suggest to him how the government could help.<sup>55</sup>

Catholic support for the new law was swiftly evident. Harry Hopkins, Federal Relief Administrator, spoke in support of the law to the members of the New York Catholic Committee of the Laity. He was followed to the platform by Cardinal Hayes who also endorsed the measure. The Cardinal said, "the security program of our President is . . . taking into consideration the preservation and conservation of those principles of action so vital to man's liberty and man's happiness here on earth."<sup>56</sup>

At the annual meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, Katherine F. Lenroot, Chief of the Department of Labor's Children's Bureau, hailed the Social

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<sup>55</sup>Rosenman, Public Papers, IV, 370.

<sup>56</sup>NCWC News Service, New York City, May 6, 1935.

Security Act as an important step toward protecting the family. She further stated that the foundation for the act could be found in both Pope Pius XI's encyclical and the statements of the American bishops. The next speaker, Right Reverend R. Marcellus Wagner, called for "a new deal in social justice." President Roosevelt honored the meeting with a personal letter in which he stressed that the NCCC and similar organizations were necessary "to complete the structure of our national security. . . ." <sup>57</sup>

Other leaders of Catholic welfare work joined in the support of the social security measure. Mary L. Gibbons, a director of the New York Catholic Charities Bureau, called it only a first step but a good beginning. She warned, however, against an optimism which might lead to the belief that passage of the act would remove the necessity for a continuation of direct Federal relief. After all, she pointed out, the Federal government only entered the field when it became obvious that local resources were inadequate to meet the needs of the depression. <sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Quoted in New York Times, September 30, 1935, p. 15; Catholic Action, November, 1935, p. 14.

<sup>58</sup>Mary L. Gibbons, "The Future of Public Relief," NCCC Proceedings, Peoria, Illinois, September 29-October 2, 1935, p. 80.

At the Cincinnati meeting of the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems, Doctor Edwin E. Witte, ex-director of the President's Committee on Economic Security, urged the promotion of social insurance laws. He made a point of thanking Church leaders for their support of the social security program. After praising the encyclical of Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, he called President Roosevelt's economic program "a major step in achieving for Americans the ideals of social justice set forth in that document."<sup>59</sup>

At the 1936 meeting of the NCCC, a formal statement was made on social security. The executive committee, which drew up the statement, endorsed the idea that the Federal government was responsible for promoting social security. The statement submitted to the conference, which was largely the inspiration of Right Reverend John O'Grady, secretary, accepted the government's role as protector of the individual against injuries from a complex and depersonalized industrial economy.<sup>60</sup> At the same meeting, Right Reverend Thomas J. O'Dwyer, ex-director of the Los Angeles Catholic Welfare Bureau, pointed out that there was much room for expansion

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<sup>59</sup>NCWC News Service, Cincinnati, March 25, 1935.

<sup>60</sup>The Boston Pilot, May 23, 1936, p. 7.

in the Roosevelt social security system. It was, however, "a very substantial beginning and is one of the most significant governmental actions in history."<sup>61</sup>

The 1935 convention of the National Conference of Catholic Women also went on record as favoring the new social security law. A resolution was passed which called for vigorous state action along the same lines to provide assistance for unemployment insurance and pensions for the aged.<sup>62</sup>

Many distinguished individual Catholics also threw their support to the social security measure. Father Ryan was whole-heartedly in favor of the measure. He called it a great document which "brings the United States up to date with Europe on the question of social insurance in one bold stroke."<sup>63</sup> As a matter of fact, Father Ryan played a part in constructing the legislation. He worked as a member of Frank P. Graham's general advisory council on social security.<sup>64</sup> Joining Ryan, in support of the new law, was

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<sup>61</sup>NCCC Proceedings, Seattle, Washington, August 2-5, 1936, pp. 126-31.

<sup>62</sup>Catholic Action, December, 1935, p. 24. The annual convention was held in Fort Wayne, Indiana, from November 17-20.

<sup>63</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan, "Social Justice in the 1935 Congress," Catholic Action, September, 1935, pp. 7-9. In this same article Ryan endorsed the Labor Disputes Act.

<sup>64</sup>Broderick, Right Reverend, p. 219.

the influential Jesuit author, Reverend John LaFarge. LaFarge was "entirely in sympathy" with the measure and feared that without it "we should be facing chaos."<sup>65</sup>

Significant elements of the Catholic press also gave their endorsement to social security. The Brooklyn Tablet felt that the act pointed in the direction of the Papal encyclicals was was a "major accomplishment."<sup>66</sup> The Boston Pilot called the principles behind the bill "commendable." The editor liked the idea of both State and Federal government sharing this responsibility. His only criticism was that the act did not provide enough funds for the aged and unemployed.<sup>67</sup> The Denver Catholic Register supported the new law and applauded the decision of the Supreme Court which upheld its constitutionality. The editor felt that the law was "in accord with the spirit of Quadragesimo Anno of Pope Pius XI."<sup>68</sup> The two influential Catholic periodicals, Commonweal and America, were not as headlong in their endorsement as was the editor of the Denver Catholic Register. The

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<sup>65</sup>Quoted in New York Times, September 26, 1935, p. 2.

<sup>66</sup>August 24, 1935, p. 10, but one year later, July 18, 1936, the same editor felt the bill had been "poorly drawn."

<sup>67</sup>April 27, 1934, p. 4; January 26, 1935, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup>June 6, 1937, p. 4.

editors of Commonweal felt that almost everyone was in sympathy with the aims of the measure but, in the same editorial, lamented that inefficient government pump-priming was leading the President nowhere.<sup>69</sup> The editor of the Jesuit weekly was also behind the aims of the bill, but remarked that "social insurance is not a goal itself but only the indication of a deeper evil in our society." He also felt that the law would have a difficult time passing the test of constitutionality. "From the standpoint of constitutional law," he remarked, "the . . . act seems to be an example of doing the right thing in a wrong way."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>December 13, 1935, p. 171.

<sup>70</sup>America, March 30, 1935, p. 582; August 31, 1935, p. 482.

## CHAPTER IX

### RECOGNITION OF RUSSIA

During Roosevelt's first term in office, foreign affairs took a back seat to the more pressing domestic economic problems. When Catholics took any interest in the foreign policy of this period, they were generally in complete harmony with the feelings of the majority of their fellow citizens. Most Americans were primarily interested in keeping the United States out of European affairs and neutral in any international quarrel.<sup>1</sup> The Catholic attitude was just as disinterested with two notable exceptions. The first dealt with the question of the United States recognizing the Soviet Union. The second concerned our diplomatic dealings with Mexico during a period of anti-clericalism there. Because these two questions produced some uniquely Catholic reactions, they must be examined in some detail.

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<sup>1</sup>Burns, Roosevelt, pp. 247-49; see also Robert A. Devine, The Illusions of Neutrality (University of Chicago, 1962), pp. 57-81.



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Catholic opinion seemed to be divided on the merits of Roosevelt's decision to follow a policy of economic nationalism. Those individuals who represented Catholic thought at its most parochial level, the editors of Catholic diocesan newspapers, generally applauded the decision in terms reminiscent of the Populists. Other Catholics, who dealt in a wider arena of thought, were not enthusiastic about economic nationalism.

When Roosevelt seemed to repudiate the efforts of the London Conference by his message of July 1, 1933, the managing editor of The Brooklyn Tablet applauded the decision. He felt this demonstrated that the United States was no longer going to permit "international bankers" to run her economy. This meant we were going to worry about our own problems rather than those of Europe.<sup>4</sup> In San Francisco the local editor called FDR's move toward economic nationalism "decidedly sane," for "it places the President in line with DeValera and Mussolini in taking care of his own country first and freeing it from the control of the Bank of England and the fiscal agents of that bank in the United States."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>July 8, 1933, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup>The Monitor, October 28, 1933, p. 1.

Samuel A. Baldus, editor of Extension magazine had already criticized Secretary of State Hull's international views as representing "a santa claus complex." Baldus rejected the idea of pushing international trade and wanted the United States to stop being concerned with the problems of the entire world.<sup>6</sup>

Even Father John Ryan, who usually took a more cosmopolitan approach to economics, seemed to favor economic nationalism. Speaking at the annual conference of the Catholic Association for International Peace, he seemed to give praise to the isolationists by stressing the reasons why the United States should give priority to internal economic self-sufficiency over the expansion of foreign commerce.<sup>7</sup> Later Ryan clarified his position by pointing out that this did not mean the United States should practice economic isolation. He wrote a friend that the "buy America" idea "is about the silliest that has been exploited in the United States in a good many years." Any such move on our part, felt Ryan, could only be expected to kill American export trade because foreign nations would quickly retaliate.

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<sup>6</sup>Extension, XXVII (May, 1933), 19.

<sup>7</sup>Catholic Action, May, 1934, p. 15.

Excessive imports had little to do with causing the depression, according to Ryan.<sup>8</sup>

A general report issued by the Catholic Association for International Peace in 1934, prepared by Father Ryan, Doctor Parker T. Moon, and Father McGowan, took a broad view of our trade policies. The report stressed that tariffs should be reduced because they were both morally and economically wrong. Furthermore, the report went on, before any recovery could be achieved, the question of war debts should be settled. While at one time such debts were just, they no longer obliged the debtee to pay, because of the emergency of the depression.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, Father McGowan went on record as favoring international economic cooperation. He warned that the failure of the United States to take part in a world-wide effort to solve the depression could only prolong it.<sup>10</sup>

While McGowan and others might call for international cooperation for economic reasons, it became readily apparent that this spirit of internationalism did not extend, in

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<sup>8</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan to G. M. Breen, March 13, 1933, Ryan Papers.

<sup>9</sup>The Catholic Herald, February 8, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup>The Catholic Transcript, November 30, 1933, p. 1.

Catholic opinion, to our dealings with the Soviet Union. Woodrow Wilson had severed diplomatic dealings with Russia after the overthrow of the Kerensky provisional government in 1917. The Republicans who followed Wilson in power during the Twenties looked askance at Russia's attempts to confiscate all private property, her repudiation of international debts, and her emphasis on world revolution. Although the Soviet Union sought on a number of occasions to discuss the points of dispute with the United States, communist propaganda in the form of diatribes on the evils of capitalism did not help to promote understanding between the two countries.<sup>11</sup>

During the 1932 presidential campaign, the question of Russian recognition was hardly the most topical one. Yet it did arise. In an interview published in the October issue of Soviet Russia Today, Roosevelt was asked his position on the question of recognition. His answer was adroit but noninformative. He pleaded that domestic affairs were so pressing that he had taken little time to inform himself in this matter. Actually there is evidence to indicate that Roosevelt did oppose the current nonrecognition policy

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<sup>11</sup>Robert Browder, The Origins of Soviet-American Diplomacy (Princeton, New Jersey, 1953), pp. 18, 22.

as being a mere "futile gesture."<sup>12</sup> But there was little political sense in pushing a topic which could only alienate some Catholic voters and really did not relate to the major issue of 1932--the economic crisis.<sup>13</sup>

Roosevelt's equivocation, however, failed to satisfy the Reverend Edmund A. Walsh, vice-president of Georgetown University and a leading Catholic authority on Communism. Father Walsh, who opposed recognition, demanded that Roosevelt make his position as clear as Hoover had, when the latter stated that he would continue the policy of non-recognition. The excuse of being uninformed on the subject was hardly adequate to Walsh who warned, in an address to the New York Civic Federation, that Russia desperately needed United States recognition because of her floundering economy.<sup>14</sup>

After Roosevelt's victory in November, however, it became increasingly clear that the administration was seriously contemplating a revision in American policy toward

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<sup>12</sup>Travis Jacobs, "America Recognizes Russia: A Conspiracy?" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Columbia University, 1960), p. 70.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>14</sup>New York Times, October 15, 1932, p. 9.

the Soviet Union. There were various rumors as to why Roosevelt should sponsor recognition. Some commentators pointed out that the United States could hardly assume world leadership--a position which seemed to be thrust upon her by the world-wide depression--and ignore the existence of Soviet Russia.<sup>15</sup> Others speculated that the recognition would be only a part of a new foreign policy aimed at curtailing the power of Germany in Europe and halting the Manchurian penetration of the Japanese. Even more popular was the theory, held by Al Smith and William Borah, that Russian trade would help lift the United States out of the depression. Finally there was the belief that recognition would do much to help restore international good will.<sup>16</sup>

Yet members of Roosevelt's official family were by no means united on the question. In the Cabinet, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace, and Postmaster General James Farley opposed recognition. Hull's reasons for opposition are not clear. According to Henry Morgenthau, Hull wanted the Russians to permit religious freedom for American nationals, but also believed that

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<sup>15</sup>NCWC News Service, May 22, 1933.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., January 9, 1933; Jacobs, "America Recognizes," pp. 81, 83.

recognition would only antagonize large elements of Catholic Democrats because of the anti-Christian attitude of Moscow.<sup>17</sup> Yet other factors entered into Hull's decision. He was also concerned with the communist repudiation of the Tsarist debt and the subversive activities of the Third International. Wallace opposed recognition because of the harsh policies of collectivization then being practiced under Stalin. He expressed his opposition to both Hull and Roosevelt.<sup>18</sup> Farley, on the other hand, agreed with Hull and disliked the anti-Christian tendencies of the Bolsheviks. He was skeptical of any promise by the Russians of religious freedom, and tried to convey this skepticism to Roosevelt, but without success.<sup>19</sup>

This internal opposition was not all that Roosevelt had to cope with on the recognition question. The Catholic Church had been expressing vigorous opposition to communism and Russia long before the 1932 campaign. Recognizing the militant atheism of the Russian leaders as a direct assault

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<sup>17</sup>John M. Blum, ed., From the Morgenthau Diaries: Years of Crisis, 1928-1938 (New York, 1959), p. 56.

<sup>18</sup>Wallace, letter to author, South Salem, New York, January 23, 1964.

<sup>19</sup>Farley, interview with author, March 20, 1965.



on the very foundations of the Church, priests and laymen united in resisting the advance of bolshevism. This opposition was directed primarily at the philosophical basis of communism, but as the Russian state practiced a vigorous anti-Christian campaign the antagonism naturally shifted to the existential exponents of the philosophy, namely, Soviet leaders and their government.

The rumors that President Roosevelt was planning to recognize Russia soon after taking office produced a significant reaction from American Catholic spokesmen. The Catholic press was virtually unanimous in its opposition to such a move. The Brooklyn Tablet started campaigning against recognition as early as December, 1932, and carried on right up to November 16, 1933, when official recognition was extended. In 1932, the editor expressed shock that Roosevelt was even considering such a course and pointed out that recognition would be approving "the godless policy" of Russia.<sup>20</sup> A few months later the paper printed front-page headlines calling for Catholics to awaken to the insidious campaign afoot to promote recognition. The writer warned the administration that such recognition would be looked

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<sup>20</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, December 10, 1932, p. 10.

upon as treason by twenty million Catholics.<sup>21</sup> A few months later, after Roosevelt sold some surplus cotton to Russia, the managing editor warned that "dealing with Russia . . . is a blunder materially, morally, and patriotically."<sup>22</sup>

In New England, The Boston Pilot kept up a continuous barrage against any proposal to deal with the Soviets. Attacking the argument that recognition would be good for trade, the editor reminded his readers that England had not experienced any increased trade after extending recognition. Furthermore, commerce should be secondary when discussing a nation which not only denied every human right but also persecuted religion.<sup>23</sup> As for the propriety of Catholics sponsoring mass rallies to oppose recognition, this editor could only say that "the honor of every human being in our Republic is at stake in the settlement of this issue."<sup>24</sup>

Many other Catholic diocesan papers also came out against any dealings with Russia. The San Francisco Monitor compared the American offer of friendship to Russia to a man

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., March 25, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., July 8, 1933, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup>The Boston Pilot, March 4, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., May 27, 1933, p. 4.

that "has clasped to his bosom a viper more deadly than death."<sup>25</sup> The Catholic Telegraph of Cincinnati, Ohio, admitted Roosevelt's "sincerity and honesty of purpose," but said that "only insatiable greed" could prompt such a mistaken course as Russian recognition.<sup>26</sup> The Catholic Herald of Milwaukee was against any dealings with Russia. The editor insisted that the Russian attempt to destroy democracy should be the main consideration in this debate, and not trade advantages.<sup>27</sup> In Chicago, The New World, which was usually liberal, insisted that the United States would lose face by dealing with Russia and gain nothing in the way of commerce.<sup>28</sup> The Catholic Messenger of Davenport, Iowa, argued that recognition of Russia would only stimulate communist agents in the United States to greater acts of subversion. The editor warned that Roosevelt, by treating with the Soviets, might lose all the good will he had gained. Before even sitting down with the Russians, said this editor, Roosevelt should insist upon recognition of the Tsarist debt

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<sup>25</sup>August 12, 1933, p. 8; this editorial view was endorsed by The Western Catholic.

<sup>26</sup>August 3, 1933, p. 4; November 2, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup>The Catholic Herald, May 11, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup>April 21, 1933, p. 4.

and an end to subversion by the current masters of Russia.<sup>29</sup> The hatred of religion exhibited by the Soviet leaders was the main factor in turning the editor of the Denver Catholic Register against attempted negotiations. He insisted that "many will ask whether the price we must pay by closing our eyes to moral filth is not too great."<sup>30</sup>

Catholic periodicals joined the diocesan papers in their campaign against dealing with Russia. The Central-Blatt and Social Justice magazine felt that recognition would only strengthen a monster and push forward "the day when the resurrected hordes of Jengis Khan will put an end to European civilization."<sup>31</sup> Commonweal attacked the ideas that recognition would mean more trade with Russia, and that she was an honest customer. Russia's presumed repudiation of international law, her opposition to religious freedom, and her ignorance of basic human rights, were in this magazine's eyes enough cause for refusing recognition.<sup>32</sup> The Jesuit

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<sup>29</sup>October 5, 1933, p. 2; June 8, 1933, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup>October 29, 1933, p. 4; The Michigan Catholic and Our Sunday Visitor of Huntington, Indiana, were other Catholic papers opposed to recognition.

<sup>31</sup>Central-Blatt and Social Justice, XXVI (April, 1933), 11.

<sup>32</sup>April 12, 1933, pp. 647-46; August 4, 1933, p. 337.

journal, America, was also against recognition, chiefly because of Russian persecution of the church.<sup>33</sup> Columbia, the official journal of the Knights of Columbus, insisted that the Russian government "does not merit the recognition of any civilized people." The question of trade benefits could not possibly make up for the loss of national honor which would follow our dealing with "such atheists."<sup>34</sup> In The Sign, a national Catholic magazine, Reverend Harold Purcell, editor, published articles condemning the recognition of Russia. Purcell wrote "in the hopes of doing the little within our power to give a true picture of Soviet Russia and do what we can to prevent our Christian Government from entering into diplomatic or trade relations with the anti-Christ and anti-God Bolsheviks."<sup>35</sup>

The opposition of the Catholic press was augmented by the efforts of various distinguished individual Catholics and by religious organizations. Prominent Catholics who expressed public opposition to the idea of the United States dealing with Russia included Father Charles Coughlin, Father

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<sup>33</sup>November 4, 1933, p. 97.

<sup>34</sup>January, 1933, p. 17; April, 1933, p. 11.

<sup>35</sup>Quoted in NCWC News Service, March 31, 1933.

John LaFarge, Father James Gillis, Father Jones I. Corrigan, professor at Boston College, and Bishop Joseph Schrembs of Cleveland. But undoubtedly the most vigorous voice in opposition belonged to Father Edmund A. Walsh, vice-president of Georgetown University.<sup>36</sup>

A number of Catholic organizations also came out publicly against any change in relations with the Soviet Union. The National Council of Catholic Men passed a resolution stressing the fact that a nation which denied the existence of God could hardly be expected to abide by an international agreement.<sup>37</sup> In Detroit, two hundred representatives from the Holy Name Societies of the city started a campaign to oppose recognition on the grounds that the Soviets were opposed to both democracy and religion.<sup>38</sup> The Long Island Chapter of the Knights of Columbus, stressing the fact that religious persecution was going on in Russia, denounced any dealings with that nation. This group also

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<sup>36</sup>Rev. John LaFarge, "Shall We Recognize Russia," America, February 18, 1933, pp. 472-73; The Brooklyn Tablet, February 25, 1933, p. 3; May 20, 1933, p. 1; Jacobs, "America Recognizes," p. 16; Commonweal, November 10, 1933, p. 29.

<sup>37</sup>The Catholic World, CXXXVIII (December, 1933), 357.

<sup>38</sup>The Michigan Catholic, May 18, 1933, p. 1; also NCWC News Service, Detroit, February 11, 1933.

pointed to the communist attempt to spread world revolution as another factor which should prevent us from dealing with them.<sup>39</sup> In Massachusetts a petition against recognition gained over 600,000 signatures and was presented to the Roosevelt administration by Senators David Walsh and Marcus A. Coolidge. The petition seems to have attracted little notice in the press, however, and there is every indication that it did not reach President Roosevelt.<sup>40</sup> From Vatican City came unofficial comments expressing hope that recognition of Russia by the United States could be prevented.<sup>41</sup>

Not all Catholics, however, were so certain that the United States should ignore the Soviet Union. The Catholic Association for International Peace, during its annual convention in 1933, attempted to draw up a comprehensive report on Russia, but was unable to make much headway because of the varied opinions represented in the organization.

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<sup>39</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, April 1, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup>When queried on it, Steve Early wrote that it probably went to the State Department and that he had not shown it to FDR. Steve Early to Mrs. J. C. Gray, August 2, 1933, Official File 220-A, Russia miscellaneous, Box 4, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>41</sup>Clipping of Washington Post, October 22, 1933, in Russia, 1933, Box 18, Papers of R. Walton Moore at Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

Nevertheless, a tentative report was drawn up which embodied all of the different views expressed at the convention. One statement said that Russia was so important from an economic, political, cultural, and religious standpoint that "if it is at all possible to deal with her, such should be undertaken." Another comment was that Russia's communistic system made her a threat to world peace and impossible to deal with; thus, rather than recognition, action short of war should be taken to assist the Russian people in overthrowing the Bolsheviks. Finally, one group proposed that after recognition the United States should undertake by propaganda and diplomatic action to secure a change in the Russian attitude toward religion. This preliminary report, which revealed both an awareness of the complexity of the problem of recognition and a divided mind on the solution, was signed by Father McGowan and other prominent prelates.<sup>42</sup>

Elsewhere Catholics were shocked to read that Al Smith had advocated recognition of Russia in an appearance before the Senate Finance Committee. Smith expressed the opinion that he did not know "any reason for not doing it." He pointed out that, although the Tsars owed us money, we had

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<sup>42</sup>Report of Catholic Association for International Peace, Washington, D. C., in Box 88, F. P. Walsh Papers.



kept troops in Russia while technically at peace with her and that this occupation had caused some damage. More importantly, Smith stressed the fact that we already had clandestine trade with Russia, so why not bring it out in the open? He did not personally like the Soviet system, but felt that communism was no threat to the United States.<sup>43</sup> These comments by Smith were enough to cause the Jesuit weekly America to wonder if there was not "a dent in the brown derby."<sup>44</sup>

Another prominent Catholic layman who supported the idea of recognition was Frank P. Walsh of New York City. Walsh received a letter from Albert Coyle in which the latter sought assistance in his campaign to become American ambassador to Russia. Coyle pointed out to Walsh that "your office should logically get a very substantial amount of the legal business that is certain to follow recognition of the Soviet Union."<sup>45</sup> While this does not mean that Walsh was motivated by material gains, it is true that he favored

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<sup>43</sup>Paul Boller, Jr., "The Great Conspiracy of 1933," Southwest Review, XXXIX (1954), 99.

<sup>44</sup>America, March 11, 1933, p. 543.

<sup>45</sup>Albert Coyle to F. P. Walsh, November 9, 1933, Box 88, F. P. Walsh Papers.

recognition. When Roosevelt finally did establish relations with Russia, he received a telegram from Walsh assuring him that the deed would receive "a high place in the record of your splendid achievements."<sup>46</sup>

Smith and Walsh, however, represented a distinct minority in Catholic opinion. Most Catholics agreed with Father Gillis, Father Walsh, and others, who vigorously opposed recognition. There was some optimism generated in group during 1933 that Roosevelt would back off from recognizing Russia. In his invitation to an international conference in Washington during April to discuss the world-wide depression, the President ignored the Soviet Union--a fact looked upon by some as a sign that all plans of recognition had been shelved. Roosevelt's remarks to the National Conference of Catholic Charities in early October promoted a similar conclusion. At the conference, Roosevelt had made the remark that a nation could not ignore God and survive. This was interpreted as a direct slap at the Soviet Union. Yet other Catholics realized that recognition of the Russian government really had little to do with the President's

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<sup>46</sup>Mr. and Mrs. F. P. Walsh to President Roosevelt, telegram, November 18, 1933, Official File 220-A, Russia miscellaneous, Box 4, Roosevelt Papers.

feeling on communism. It was reported that the whole question "is being weighed as a practical one." Neither approval nor disapproval of the regime was associated with diplomatic recognition, which merely indicated "a working arrangement with a de facto authority which will facilitate commercial intercourse."<sup>47</sup>

In October, however, Roosevelt took a step which dispelled much of the false optimism occasioned in Catholic circles by his speech to the NCCC. On October 10, 1933, the President made public a letter which he had addressed to Mikhail Kalinin, President of Russia. In the letter Roosevelt requested that the Soviet Government send a representative to the United States to discuss all outstanding differences between the two countries in hopes of settling them. In response to this invitation, Maxim Litvinov, Commissar for Foreign Affairs, left Russia for the United States.

With this development, many Catholics turned to Reverend Edmund Walsh for advice. Walsh was the first and foremost critic of recognition. Right after the 1932 election, Walsh addressed a Women's Club of Holyoke, Massachusetts, on the eternal conflict between the Russian and the

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<sup>47</sup>NCWC News Service, April 10, 1933 and "Washington Letter" of October 9, 1933.

American view of life. Its dedication to world revolution was the one thing that made Russia unique and made dealing with it different from dealing with any other nation.<sup>48</sup> A few days later, in Brockton, Massachusetts, Walsh continued his campaign against Russia, but said hopefully, "I doubt very much that a Democratic administration will repudiate a national policy initiated by Woodrow Wilson and continued by three Republican administrations."<sup>49</sup>

As rumors of impending recognition grew stronger in 1933, Walsh increased the pace of his campaign. He saw Russia's withdrawal from the League of Nations as a diplomatic move to promote United States recognition in exchange for Soviet pressure against Germany and Japan.<sup>50</sup> In reply to Smith's statement favoring recognition, Walsh asserted that the New Yorker was really missing the main point of the dispute. The questions of trade and repudiation of debts were really secondary to the fact that the two civilizations were "diametrically opposed in their principles, their practices,

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<sup>48</sup>The Boston Pilot, November 19, 1932, p. 5.

<sup>49</sup>Quoted in The Brooklyn Tablet, November 26, 1932, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, March 18, 1933, p. 1.

and their objectives. . . ."<sup>51</sup> Commonweal added that Father Walsh was opposed to recognition primarily because "he is bitterly and justly opposed to the war upon religion, to the suppression of fundamental rights of the Christian conscience, which prevails there."<sup>52</sup>

Walsh himself presented the most detailed statement of his argument against recognition before a mass meeting held in Washington on April 18, 1933, and attended by representatives from the AFL, the American Legion, and other groups opposed to dealing with the Soviet Union. Once again the priest stressed the ideological aspects of the problem. His basic premise was that Russia was trying to destroy democracy via the Third International. Furthermore, the communist ethic recognized no legal or moral law. Also the Bolsheviks could not even lay claim to complete sovereignty of Russian territory because of daily revolts by her enslaved people. Walsh concluded that only by abandoning the Third International and the aim of world revolution could Russia demonstrate a sincere desire to live in the community of nations. Strangely, Walsh made no mention in his speech of

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<sup>51</sup>The Boston Pilot, April 29, 1933, p. 12.

<sup>52</sup>Commonweal, May 5, 1933, p. 4.

Russia's persecution of the Church or of the militant atheism of the Communist Party.<sup>53</sup>

While Father Walsh was the most persistent opponent of recognition, he had valuable support from other sources. The Most Reverend Joseph Schrembs, Bishop of Cleveland, and Episcopal Chairman of the Department of Lay Organization of the NCWC, gave a public interview on October 23, 1933. In his statement the Bishop expressed the hope that the administration would demand that "Russia promise liberty of conscience and of religious worship to its citizens and that it cease from its active communistic propaganda" as a prerequisite of recognition.<sup>54</sup> In Rome, Bishop Michele d'Herbigny, President of the Pontifical Commission for Russia at the Vatican, called on President Roosevelt to demand religious liberty as a requirement for United States recognition of Russia.<sup>55</sup> Other sources indicate that even the Pope wished Roosevelt would use recognition as a leverage to get some

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<sup>53</sup>Copy of address by Rev. Edmund Walsh in Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 1st Sess., in Official File 220-A, Russia miscellaneous, Box 4, Roosevelt Papers; Browder, Origins, p. 39.

<sup>54</sup>NCWC News Service, Cleveland, October 23, 1933.

<sup>55</sup>Jacobs, "America Recognizes," p. 13.

guarantee of religious freedom from Russia.<sup>56</sup>

Behind the scenes it appears that President Roosevelt was noting this Catholic opposition and taking steps to ameliorate it. On the same day that he sent his letter to President Kalinin inviting discussion of the outstanding differences between the two countries, Roosevelt met with Father Walsh to discuss the whole question at the White House. Walsh was later convinced that recognition was already a fait accompli, and that Roosevelt suggested the talk simply to find out the priest's reaction. Walsh later stated that the President seemed to have a rather cavalier attitude toward the issue. "In reply," said Walsh,

. . . to certain observations I had made respecting the difficulty of negotiating with the Soviets, he answered with that disarming assurance so characteristic of his technique in dealing with visitors, "Leave it to me, Father; I am a good horse dealer."

Perhaps to impress Walsh with the importance he attached to religious freedom, the President asked him to prepare a report on the state of religion in Russia which could be used when serious discussions were undertaken.<sup>57</sup> Despite Walsh's later misgivings, it appears that he was convinced enough of

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<sup>56</sup>Gannon, Cardinal Spellman Story, p. 98.

<sup>57</sup>Rev. Louis J. Gallagher, S.J., Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., A Biography (New York, 1962), p. 93.

Roosevelt's sincerity to promise not to make any public statements which "would embarrass" the President in his talks with the Russians. This was a rather substantial concession for a man who had taken such a public stand against recognition.<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, other sources exist which seem to indicate that Roosevelt had succeeded in converting Walsh into an ally after their talk of October 10. On October 15, 1933, Walter G. Hooke of New York City wrote to Marvin McIntyre that Father Walsh had authorized him to say "that he [Walsh] was prepared to place the AFL, the American Legion, the Bishop Freeman Committee (Protestants), and the Catholics squarely behind the administration's program for Russia, solely on economic grounds, and with reasonable protection of our own interest." Admitting that this was an exaggerated view of Walsh's influence, it still represents a rather startling new position for the priest. In the same letter, Hooke requested that McIntyre arrange a conference for Walsh with the President because the priest was "anxious to furnish certain information."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Jacobs, "America Recognizes," p. 89.

<sup>59</sup>Walter G. Hooke to Marvin McIntyre, October 15, 1933, Official File 220-A, Russia miscellaneous, Box 4, Roosevelt Papers.



After the meeting, which occurred on Friday, October 20, 1933, Walsh wrote to McIntyre to thank him for arranging it. The priest also said that he was "preparing the memo" requested by the President. He enclosed a copy of a press release he had made on October 21, "which I trust," he said, "will contribute something to the tranquility of mind needed for the forthcoming negotiations." The priest also mentioned that he had canceled a scheduled lecture in Providence, Rhode Island, on Russia and was substituting one of capitalism instead.<sup>60</sup>

The October 21 press release that Walsh referred to is a revealing document. In it the priest declared that President Roosevelt should not be restricted in his dealings with Russian diplomats by public debate among American citizens. "The President," said Walsh, "should not be hampered, or annoyed, or embarrassed, as he undertakes to fulfill his constitutional duty and exercise his constitutional prerogative in the conduct of our international relations." This seemed a rather remarkable statement for someone who had engaged in vigorous public debate on the question of

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<sup>60</sup>Rev. Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., to Marvin McIntyre, October 21, 1933, Official File 220-A, Russia, Box 4, Roosevelt Papers.

recognition for almost twelve months. Now when the issue reached its most critical stage, Walsh called for silence. Elsewhere in the statement, Walsh said he was not convinced that the President's letter to Kalinin insured that recognition would take place. According to the priest, FDR simply wanted to discuss the outstanding problems between the two countries. Walsh said that if these difficulties could be resolved, he would be first to support recognition. He promised to refrain from making public comments until the conference between Roosevelt and Maxim Litvinov was over.<sup>61</sup>

How can this remarkable turnabout in Walsh's outlook be explained? It should be recalled that Walsh had constantly attacked the inherent conflict between the Russian or communist philosophy of life and American democracy. Another subject of his attack was the subversion practiced by the Third International.<sup>62</sup> He had given little discussion to the question of religious freedom in Russia or to the persecution of the Church. Instead, he had concentrated on the conflict of systems of government and philosophy. How he

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<sup>61</sup>New York Times, October 22, 1933, p. 25; this press release seems to contradict Gallagher's observation that Walsh already accepted recognition as an accomplished fact.

<sup>62</sup>Jacobs, "America Recognizes," p. 89.

expected a conference of diplomats to resolve this conflict is difficult to understand. Probably he did not expect any resolution to the problems he had raised in his speeches, but now realized that, in Walter Hooke's words, "the President has the cards in his hands and he knows it."<sup>63</sup>

It seems clear, however, that the President had convinced Walsh that his best course of action, if he really wanted to assist his country in the forthcoming negotiations, would be to submit a private memorandum specifying in detail the particular grievances of the Church against Russia and citing cases and individual names. This would be worth more than public speeches filled with bitter generalities which could only weaken Roosevelt's hand in his talks with the Russians.

Before Walsh could present his memorandum, however, there were other developments. The priest had called Marvin McIntyre on October 30 and promised delivery of his memo on the following day. At the same time, he requested another private conference with President Roosevelt. In McIntyre's words, "certain embarrassing complications had come up" and Walsh felt that "we were going to run into opposition but

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<sup>63</sup>Hooke to McIntyre, October 15, 1933, Official File 220-A, Russia, Box 4, Roosevelt Papers.

that it could be straightened out."<sup>64</sup> What complications he referred to were not stated, but it should be noted that Bishop Joseph Schrembs of Cleveland had recently made a public statement in which he listed certain demands which the United States should make as a prerequisite to recognition of Russia. Naturally, religious freedom was one of the Bishop's demands. Furthermore, the Catholic press had not ceased discussing the question. Reverend Wilfrid Parsons, S.J., editor of America, wrote an "Open Letter to M. Litvinov," in which he stressed the point of religious liberty.<sup>65</sup>

The memorandum that Walsh finally sent to President Roosevelt, on October 31, discussed the entire question of religious liberty in Russia. The priest began by asserting that "the attitude of the Soviet Government toward Religion is entirely different from any other government in the world." To prove this thesis, he used illustrations from the pages of history and concluded by saying:

. . . Communism, which is the political, social and economic force controlling the Soviet Government, undertaken to abolish religion itself, the "God idea," in its every form and manifestation.

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<sup>64</sup>Marvin McIntyre to President Roosevelt, confidential memo, October 30, 1933, Official File 220, Russia, Box 1, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>65</sup>America, November 4, 1933, p. 107.

Walsh then went on to sketch the history of religion under the Communist party in Russia. Atheism was, said Walsh, an integral part of a movement both international in design and militant in attitude. This being the case,

. . . the anti-religious content of Soviet foreign policy, inasmuch as it visualizes the entire world, is as inadmissible by other foreign states as is the Third International. One is directed against our political sovereignty, the other against our religious institutions. Both are sponsored by the Soviet Government, no matter what the evasions or pretexts may be.

Once having said this, Walsh went on to make clear that he did not favor extending diplomatic recognition to Russia. If, however, recognition were extended, he hoped that the following objectives might be supported by the United States:

1. Complete liberty of conscience for all, whether citizens of Russia or nationals of a foreign jurisdiction residing on Soviet territory, be they Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Jews or Mussulmans.
2. Private and public exercise of their religious beliefs for all by such external forms as appertain to their respective worship without discrimination arising from adherence to such religious beliefs.
3. Release of prisoners--Bishops, priests, other ministers of religion, and laymen--now in confinement under charges connected with religion.

Walsh admitted that "conventional guarantees customarily alleged are useless and sterile." This made it even more imperative that Roosevelt take a strong stand, because

the United States was "the last government in a position to effectively implement such guarantees." This could be done "by requiring appropriate and explicit clauses to be inserted in any proposed agreement--and published before recognition or at least simultaneously." Walsh insisted that "the unusual circumstances and the extraordinary importance of the issue justify unusual and extraordinary measures." Certainly the priest realized that if the United States did recognize the Soviet Government without the aforementioned guarantees, such action could not be interpreted as meaning that Roosevelt or his administration favored the religious policies of the communists. Nevertheless, he insisted that "recognition without [such guarantees] would have the practical effect of helping to perpetuate conditions that are a matter of public record." Although pessimistic, Walsh could only hope that Russia might "now be prepared to do something concrete in amelioration of religious persecution in order to secure what they most need from the United States."<sup>66</sup>

A few days later, Walsh sent in a supplement to his original document. In this letter, dated November 7, the

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<sup>66</sup>Edmund A. Walsh, "Memorandum on Religion in Soviet Russia," presented to President Roosevelt, October 31, 1933, Washington, D. C. Copy in author's possession.

priest pointed out that in several conferences he had with ex-Senator S. W. Brookhart of Iowa on Soviet recognition, a certain Boris Skvirsky, the unofficial Soviet representative in the United States, had entered into the talks and had relayed their substance to Moscow. According to Walsh, Moscow's reply was "Let Walsh specify who is in prison on account of religion and where. We will consider his proposition." Father Walsh suggested to Roosevelt that this answer was "valuable as indicating at least a tendency on the part of the Soviets to listen to the recommendations outlined in the memorandum,--and which we all devoutly hope you can persuade Mr. Litvinov to accept." Walsh also included for Roosevelt copies of editorials from Commonweal and America. He described the views expressed therein as representing the feelings of the majority of American Catholics and what he himself would have said "had I not deemed it more helpful to rest our case on the arguments submitted in my private memorandum of Oct 31st."<sup>67</sup>

What most Catholics would demand as preconditions for any dealings with the Soviet Union is not surprising.

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<sup>67</sup>Rev. Edmund A. Walsh to President Roosevelt, November 4, 1933, Official File 220-A, Russia miscellaneous, 1933, Box 4, Roosevelt Papers. The editorials will be discussed below.

Certainly a cessation of religious persecution was high on the list of priorities. Other sources spelled out the preconditions in more detail. The Vatican, it seems, had asked Cardinal Hayes of New York to represent to Roosevelt its desires that he raise the question of religious persecution in his forthcoming talks with Litvinov. Cardinal Hayes sent Monsignor Robert F. Keegan to the White House to transmit this desire on the part of the Catholic Church. On November 1, Keegan presented to President Roosevelt a memorandum on four topics: freedom of conscience for Russians and foreigners; freedom of worship, public and private; liberation of those imprisoned for their faith; and cessation of propaganda against God.<sup>68</sup>

Keegan must have been very eloquent in his presentation, for on November 2, Cardinal Hayes wrote a confidential note saying: "The President conferred with the Monsignor for more than one hour . . . and substantially [accepted] the points of the memorandum."<sup>69</sup>

During this same period, Bishop Francis Spellman of Boston also got into the act. He received a letter from

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<sup>68</sup>Gannon, Cardinal Spellman, p. 425, fn. 2, who cites the Spellman Papers, a source open only to a select few.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.



Count Enrico Galeazzi which told of the Pope's desire to have the President insist upon religious freedom as a prerequisite for recognition of Russia. After recognition was extended to Russia, Bishop Spellman wrote in his diary, "Jack Kelly and Mr. Galeazzi, whose names will never appear in history, did much to get President Roosevelt to insist that American citizens at least should worship God as they wished in Russia."<sup>70</sup> Count Enrico Galeazzi was the official Vatican architect and Pius XII's "closest lay adviser." According to Reverend Robert I. Gannon, Galeazzi and John C. Kelly gave FDR a picture of the religious situation in Russia "and the deep concern of all religious people outside of Russia."<sup>71</sup>

While these oblique negotiations between Catholics and the administration over the terms of Russian recognition were going on, an incident occurred which indicates that Walsh, Keegan, and Spellman did not represent all American Catholics in this matter. The Bishops of the Administrative Council of the NCWC were scheduled to meet in Washington on

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<sup>70</sup>Excerpts from Cardinal Spellman's Diary, November 7, 1933 and November 10, 1933, cited in Gannon, Cardinal Spellman, p. 98.

<sup>71</sup>Rev. Robert I. Gannon, letter to author, May 6, 1965.

November 15, 1933, with Bishop James Ryan of Catholic University as host. Before the meeting opened, Reverend Maurice S. Sheehy of Catholic University wrote a letter to Marvin McIntyre, presumably with the knowledge and concurrence of Bishop Ryan, in which he made a number of interesting proposals. Sheehy felt that the meeting of the bishops during the turmoil of debate on the recognition of Russia presented an opportunity to "render some service to the President, to whom we are unutterably indebted." One must speculate that this indebtedness was due to Roosevelt's appearance at Catholic University earlier in the year to receive an honorary degree. The question of Russian recognition, Sheehy continued, had disturbed many of the American bishops and they had, in turn, asked Bishop Ryan for guidance. Finally coming to the point, Sheehy suggested that the President might want to address the bishops "on the service religion can render to the Government in the present crisis." If this were not feasible, the priest recommended a formal statement by FDR that "the interests of religion were properly safeguarded in all international dealings." Sheehy's purpose was obvious--he wanted to forestall any statement by the bishops that might, as Walsh had earlier warned, hamper the President in his negotiations with Litvinov. It is strange that Sheehy

should not have been aware of the negotiations already in progress between Walsh and Roosevelt, but there is no indication that he was. Sheehy ended his letter with a revealing statement:

The press and the educational institutions of the Catholic Church have been solidly behind President Roosevelt in his every move. We are concerned to insure that there be not the slightest break in this united front back of the President's program.

The priest feared that the negotiations with Russia might produce such a break and desperately wanted to head it off. He need not have had any fears, for, as has been seen, other sources were already making arrangements with the administration. Sheehy's own efforts, however, came to naught, primarily because McIntyre felt the proposal too explosive and did not even acknowledge receipt of the letter.<sup>72</sup>

It appears that only certain elements of the Church were aware of the administration's willingness to listen to Catholic objections to recognition. These elements included Walsh and Cardinal Hayes. Despite this limited awareness, the Catholic press shifted its stand on the entire question

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<sup>72</sup>Rev. Maurice S. Sheehy to Marvin McIntyre, November 3, 1933, Official File, 220-A, Russia miscellaneous, Box 4, Roosevelt Papers. McIntyre sent the letter to Miss LeHand with a memo saying, "maybe I am unduly cautious, but I am not even acknowledging this letter."

soon after Roosevelt sent his letter to President Kalinin of Russia on October 10. Editors no longer ruled out recognition completely, but instead concentrated on insisting that the negotiations consider the question of religious freedom and persecution.<sup>73</sup> Most editors agreed that Roosevelt himself was dedicated to such principles and would press for them more vigorously if public manifestations were made. The Monitor of San Francisco now agreed to recognition "if Russia is willing to recognize free religious organization in Russia."<sup>74</sup> The Michigan Catholic urged a joint statement by all Catholic organizations demanding, as a prerequisite to diplomatic relations, "definite guarantees against religious persecution and war on our government."<sup>75</sup> The Brooklyn Tablet made similar demands, as did America.<sup>76</sup> In the latter publication, Father Parsons wrote an article entitled "Open Letter to M. Litvinov" in which he demanded religious freedom for Russia, but significantly stated that Catholics should stand behind the President in the discussions. Addressing

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<sup>73</sup>Pax, November, 1933, p. 55.

<sup>74</sup>October 28, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup>November 2, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>76</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, October 28, 1933, p. 1; America, November 4, 1933, p. 97.

himself to Litvinov, Parsons warned, "you may be sure at the outset that the President has our confidence and support in these discussions."<sup>77</sup> Commonweal echoed the sentiments of Bishops Schrembs of Cleveland that Roosevelt should make Russia "promise liberty of conscience and of religious worship."<sup>78</sup> Extension magazine realized that the United States could not conduct international diplomacy on moral platitudes, but was still against recognition of Russia because in doing so we would "lose our shirts in any loan and buy transaction. . . ."<sup>79</sup>

In this atmosphere, after nine days of discussion, Roosevelt and Litvinov formally exchanged notes on their conversation on November 16. The notes contained a number of salient features. First, Russia promised to curtail subversive activity in the United States. Second, the Soviets agreed to permit to American citizens in Russia free exercise of their religion. Third, both nations promised to negotiate a settlement of mutual claims. This exchange of notes represented the extension of full diplomatic recognition to

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<sup>77</sup>America, November 4, 1933, p. 107.

<sup>78</sup>Quoted in Commonweal, November 10, 1933, p. 30.

<sup>79</sup>December, 1933, p. 17.

the Soviet Union by the United States. Clearly the question dealing with religious freedom played a significant part in the negotiations. William Bullitt even described Litvinov as becoming exasperated with Roosevelt's preoccupation with religion while important trade matters were yet to be discussed.<sup>80</sup>

This emphasis on religion, however, was not due solely to the pressure of American Catholics. It should be recalled that Roosevelt himself had a high regard for the role of religion in any society. His remark to the NCCC that nations must recognize God in order to survive, was not mere political window-dressing. Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor under Roosevelt, was convinced that it was the President's personal convictions, rather than "Roman Catholic pressure," which caused him to stress the religious guarantees in the talks with Litvinov. "It seemed to him," she wrote, "a natural moral guarantee."<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, Roosevelt frequently took pleasure in describing how he lectured Litvinov on the importance of religion, even going so far as to predict that the Russian would himself return to God before he died.

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<sup>80</sup>Gannon, Cardinal Spellman, p. 175.

<sup>81</sup>Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew, pp. 142-43.

Roosevelt related that at this, "Max got red and fumbled and seemed embarrassed and just didn't know quite what to say."<sup>82</sup> Of course, recognition of Roosevelt's religious sincerity does not preclude recognition of his political sensitivity. Here was one occasion when, by serving one, he also "served the additional purpose of placating some of the vigorous opposition to recognition . . . by the Catholic Church."<sup>83</sup>

As other observers have pointed out, most Americans were quite satisfied with the terms of recognition worked out by Roosevelt and Litvinov. Before Litvinov sailed for home, he was given a farewell dinner in New York City. Many prominent American businessmen attended, but it was noted that "no Cardinal or other Catholic official was present."<sup>84</sup> This did not mean, however, that American Catholics were displeased with President Roosevelt's actions. Indeed, evidence indicates that the President emerged from the affair with an even higher reputation among Catholics than he had possessed before it started. Monsignor Robert F. Keegan,

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<sup>82</sup>Quoted in ibid., p. 143.

<sup>83</sup>Tugwell, Democratic Roosevelt, p. 346. Tugwell observes that FDR "felt very strongly" about freedom of religious worship.

<sup>84</sup>Boller, "Great Conspiracy," p. 111.

Cardinal Hayes's Secretary, congratulated Roosevelt on his achievement. "The masterly fashion," wrote Keegan, "in which you championed the vitally sacred principles which we Americans hold so dear is clear." Keegan also spoke of the Cardinal's satisfaction over the terms of recognition.<sup>85</sup> The President replied that "we have really accomplished much in regard to the difficult question of religion in Russia," and asked for official Catholic sentiment on the terms.<sup>86</sup>

Official Catholic sentiment on the terms of recognition was not difficult to discover. Individual Catholics did not hesitate to comment on the proceedings. Father Walsh, the most articulate opponent of recognition, issued a statement in Washington on November 23. He felt the agreement meant the end of the Third International. Acceptance of the President's terms, said Walsh, meant "a significant abandonment of the previous Soviet policy." But Walsh was careful to point out that much depended upon an honest fulfillment of the terms by the Soviet Union.<sup>87</sup> Reverend Joseph F. Thorning, S.J., one of America's editors, emphasized that

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<sup>85</sup>Msgr. Keegan to FDR, November 18, 1933, President's Personal File, Box 628, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>86</sup>FDR to Msgr. Keegan, November 22, 1933, ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Quoted in The Boston Pilot, November 25, 1933, p. 12.



the chief aspect of the entire agreement was that the inherent spiritual nature of man had been recognized by Russia. The talks were a lesson in morality for the Soviet Union and could possibly open the door for a change in her godless policy.<sup>88</sup> Another Jesuit, Reverend John LaFarge, was skeptical of Russia's sincerity but not of FDR's. No one who had seen President Roosevelt's "profoundly religious and patriotic attitude," said LaFarge, could doubt that he would insist upon the fulfillment of the terms of the agreement.<sup>89</sup> It was also reported, by Bishop Henry P. Rohiman of Davenport, Iowa, that Pope Pius XI was gratified with Roosevelt's work in securing freedom of worship for Americans in Russia.<sup>90</sup>

The Catholic press, while divided on the merits and terms of recognizing Russia, was unanimous in its praise of President Roosevelt's personal behavior. The Brooklyn Tablet did not want recognition now or ever, but felt that FDR's handling of the entire matter was "splendid." The Catholic News of New York was skeptical about Russia's sincerity, but hoped that this might mark the beginning of a change in that

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<sup>88</sup>Rev. Joseph F. Thorning, S.J., "What Russian Recognition Means," America, December 2, 1933, p. 200.

<sup>89</sup>Quoted in The Brooklyn Tablet, January 6, 1934, p. 4.

<sup>90</sup>New York Times, March 27, 1934, p. 9.

country. The Baltimore Catholic Review was not satisfied with religious freedom solely for Americans, but wanted it extended to Russians as well. The Denver Catholic Register felt that "President Roosevelt acted in the best of conscience," but that "recognition was granted because of secret international fears." Both The Intermountain Catholic of Salt Lake City and The Witness of Dubuque, Iowa, called recognition a mistake. The Catholic Universe Bulletin of Cleveland felt obliged to support FDR's action because he apparently knew more of the entire situation than did the general public and the paper trusted his judgment. In Rochester, New York, The Catholic Courier congratulated President Roosevelt for "winning from Litvinov the concession of freedom of religion." The Western Catholic of Quincy, Illinois, speculated that Litvinov must have been "shocked" by Roosevelt's great stress on religion. FDR's action, according to The Catholic Herald of St. Louis, Missouri, served "official notice that religion means something to the American people."<sup>91</sup>

Throughout its coverage of recognition, the Catholic press seemed certain of two facts: that recognition of

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<sup>91</sup>A review of these editorial opinions is presented in NCWC News Service, December 4, 1933.

Russia was a bad policy no matter how interpreted; and second, that President Roosevelt was a hero for defending the value of religion in society against communistic propaganda.<sup>92</sup> The over-all reaction was best summarized by Commonweal, which said that FDR "accomplished as much for religious freedom in Russia as . . . was possible."<sup>93</sup> A few sources even credited Catholic pressure with being the decisive factor in winning the issue of religious liberty a place at the bargaining table. It was, asserted The Brooklyn Tablet, the united action of Catholic and Protestant groups which caused FDR to go slow in the negotiations and to demand religious freedom as one of the conditions for recognition.<sup>94</sup> The Michigan Catholic felt that Roosevelt obviously "kept uppermost in his mind" the demands by Catholics that he request guarantees of religious liberty from the Russians.<sup>95</sup> America was satisfied about the terms because "what we asked for was accomplished."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Pax, December, 1933, p. 91.

<sup>93</sup>December 1, 1933, p. 117.

<sup>94</sup>November 18, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup>November 30, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>96</sup>December 2, 1933, p. 193.

What remains unexplained amid all this editorial comment is how the Catholic Church could change from a position of outright hatred for a godless regime, whose basic principles precluded international agreements or any dealings with democracies, to a position which, while still skeptical, could view the terms of recognition as a real achievement, provided Russia kept its word. After constantly hammering away at the untrustworthiness of the Russians, "suddenly, the hierarchy seemed to believe that Moscow, with equal suddenness, would faithfully adhere to the paper pledges."<sup>97</sup> After debating the question of relations on a level which took note of such historic and philosophical principles of communism as world revolution, the class struggle, and ethical pragmatism, Catholics seemed greatly reassured over "paper pledges" of religious liberty for Americans--a condition which Litvinov always insisted already existed in Russia.<sup>98</sup> A final explanation for this shift of position is impossible, but one may hypothesize that perhaps the Church and most Catholic spokesmen never really expected to prevent Roosevelt's negotiations with Russia, but felt duty bound to make

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<sup>97</sup>Jacobs, "America Recognizes," p. 90.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

their opinions known on the subject. Then when the administration seemed to take cognizance of their views and gave them some attention, they became flattered by the unexpected hearing. Thrown slightly off balance by the President's interest, they accepted his largely meaningless demand for religious liberty of Americans in Russia with little critical analysis. How else explain Father Walsh who at one time stressed the untrustworthiness of Russia and afterwards said that the only thing that remained short of normal relations was the "honest . . . fulfillment of Moscow's public pledge"? Surely all of his prior comments indicated that, to him, such an honest fulfillment from the Soviets was impossible.

## CHAPTER X

### THE MEXICAN AFFAIR

The Roosevelt administration has been praised by historians for its development of a "Good Neighbor" policy toward Latin America. The merits and justice of this title are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Any final assessment of Roosevelt's Latin American policy would, however, be incomplete without an evaluation of his dealings with Mexico during the height of that country's troubles with the Catholic Church. Such a commentary may also throw additional light on the relationship between the American Catholic Church and the Roosevelt administration, for the antagonism aroused over the "Mexican question" was the most severe strain imposed on the generally harmonious relationship between Roosevelt and American Catholics.

In order to appreciate the sensitivity of the Mexican situation, it should be recalled that the question of the Church's role in Mexico, following the epic period of the Revolution, had not been settled satisfactorily. As a close ally of the old established regimes preceding the Revolution,

the Church was viewed by many Mexicans as being opposed to the Revolution and the ideas behind it. The Church's influence in education was considered to be a serious hinderance to the social goals of the Revolution. During the 1920's, much anti-Church legislation had been passed and actual physical conflict had broken out between the followers of the government and the Church. American Catholics had shown a lively interest in the fate of their co-religionists south of the border and, through the good offices of Ambassador Dwight Morrow, had participated in negotiations to bring about a truce between Church and State in 1929. This arrangement, however, was a precarious one at best and soon the Mexican Government was once more challenging the Church's prerogative in education.<sup>1</sup>

It was with a keen awareness of this situation that American Catholics viewed the appointment of Josephus Daniels as the Roosevelt ambassador to Mexico. Daniels, as Secretary of Navy under President Wilson, had been the chief of the young Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was serving as Assistant Secretary. Daniels' selection as ambassador in 1933 meant,

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<sup>1</sup>E. David Cronon, Josephus Daniels in Mexico (Madison, Wisconsin, 1960), p. 83; E. D. Cronon, "American Catholics and Mexican Anticlericalism, 1933-1936," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLV (September, 1958), 202.

as the NCWC viewed it, that "FDR would have a personal representative in this extra sensitive post."<sup>2</sup>

American Catholics lost little time in informing Daniels of the importance of his new post. Reverend Wilfrid Parsons, editor of America, wrote an open letter to the new ambassador calling upon him to use his position to pressure the Mexican government into curtailing its persecution of the Church. Parsons assured Daniels that he had the authority to do this based upon the precedents established by Ambassador Dwight W. Morrow. Thus from the very outset Daniels was called upon by American Catholics to become embroiled in the Church-State question.<sup>3</sup> While not directly calling for Daniels to meddle into the internal affairs of a foreign nation, Reverend John Burke, Secretary of the NCWC, wrote a confidential letter to the Ambassador cautioning him about the explosiveness of the Church-State question in his new post.<sup>4</sup>

It soon became clear that many American Catholics

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<sup>2</sup>NCWC News Service, March 20, 1933.

<sup>3</sup>Rev. Wilfrid Parsons, "An Open Letter to Ambassador Daniels," America, April 1, 1933, pp. 618-19; NCWC News Service, April 1, 1933.

<sup>4</sup>Cronon, Josephus Daniels, p. 85.



needed no excuse in order to protest against what they considered to be unjust treatment of their co-religionists in Mexico. On January 12, 1933, the Bishops' Administrative Committee of the NCWC issued a statement protesting the anti-clerical practices of the Mexican government. They asked American citizens "to interest themselves in the restoration in Mexico of religious freedom for its citizens."<sup>5</sup> Ambassador Daniels was, it seemed, about to become a scapegoat for an attempt to pressure the Roosevelt administration into helping the Church in Mexico.

Daniels was soon to realize that it was virtually impossible to avoid the critical eyes of American Catholics. When presenting his credentials to President Abelardo L. Rodriguez upon arrival in Mexico, the new ambassador expressed admiration for the great social advances made by the Mexican people. The statement was a mere platitude, almost universal among diplomats at largely ceremonial meetings. Yet Daniel's remarks provoked condemnation by the Baltimore Catholic Review and a few other Catholic publications. This--to Catholics--inauspicious beginning was mitigated some by the effect of the ambassador's call for

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<sup>5</sup>Huber, Our Bishops Speak, p. 201.

freedom of religion in his address in Mexico City on July 14, 1933. This address was given wide coverage by American Catholic papers.<sup>6</sup>

In the meantime, events occurred in Mexico which gave Daniels reason to hope that his conduct could win the support of American Catholics. Archbishop Diaz of Mexico City, one of the leading churchmen in the country, had seen fit to praise Daniels for his "high conception and conduct . . . on religious matters." The Archbishop remarked in private conversation that the ambassador's public statements and actions "had gained the friendship, respect and confidence of many people in and out of government circles."<sup>7</sup>

Daniels' hopes were shortlived, for soon American Catholics were demanding his recall. In retrospect, the cause celebre which was the reason American Catholics called for Daniels' dismissal and pressured President Roosevelt to intervene in Mexican affairs, seems embarrassingly innocent. On July 26, 1934, Ambassador Daniels addressed the members of

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<sup>6</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, July 22, 1933, p. 1; Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," pp. 203-204.

<sup>7</sup>Memorandum of a conversation between Colonel Moreno and Archbishop Diaz, Mexico City, August 28, 1933, Box 777, Josephus Daniels Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

a seminar on education in Mexico City. In the course of his speech, he quoted the remarks of General Plutarco Elias Calles on the importance of education to the future of Mexico. Callas had said, "we must enter and take possession of the mind of childhood, the mind of youth." Daniels, considering this phrase innocent enough, had remarked that, "to the carrying out of that aim, which alone can give to Mexico the high place envisioned by its statesmen, the Government is making the rural school a social institution."<sup>8</sup>

What appeared innocent to Ambassador Daniels, however, was not viewed in the same light by American Catholics. A few Catholic publications immediately criticized the speech. Seeking to head off an unpleasant situation, the NCWC News Service sought out Daniels own interpretation of the affair and published a fair account. It stressed the fact that the Ambassador was only endorsing the type of public school system used in the United States.<sup>9</sup> But many Catholic editors had a different interpretation of the speech. Commonweal wrote that Daniels' action in "upholding the destructive central policy of the absolute state, will have a profound

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<sup>8</sup>Copy of address by Daniels, Box 777, Daniels Papers.

<sup>9</sup>Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 208.

effect upon the New Deal in the U. S." It would cause Americans "to ask themselves how soon they are to meet the same fate here as their fellow religionists are suffering in Russia, Germany, and Mexico."<sup>10</sup> The Catholic World, through the editorial comments of Reverend James Gillis, said that the education praised by Daniels was socialized and atheistic. Gillis felt that Daniels should keep quiet or else resign his post.<sup>11</sup> The Jesuit weekly, America, agreed that Daniels should resign. If the Ambassador did not know the entire context of Calles' remarks that he had quoted, his ignorance could not be excused. Later the same magazine claimed that the entire "good neighbor" policy developed by Roosevelt was being jeopardized by an antireligious government fostered by our State Department.<sup>12</sup>

The protest soon spread to Catholic organizations. In New York City, delegations of Catholic students picketed

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<sup>10</sup>October 26, 1934, p. 600.

<sup>11</sup>The Catholic World, CXL (December, 1934), 259-60.

<sup>12</sup>America, September 1, 1934, p. 484; December 1, 1934, p. 169. Catholic diocesan papers also joined the general condemnation of Daniels; see The Catholic Register, Baltimore Catholic Review, and The Brooklyn Tablet, which all expressed disapproval of Daniels' remarks and suggested his removal. Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 208; The Brooklyn Tablet, November 3, 1934, p. 9.

the Mexican Consulate and called for the resignation of Ambassador Daniels. The Catholic Evidence Guild sent letters of indignation to President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull. Even the Ancient Order of Hibernians got into the act.<sup>13</sup> Mary C. Duffy, Regent of the Catholic Daughters of America, wrote to the President protesting Daniels' endorsement of the pagan education of Mexico.<sup>14</sup> The Holy Name Societies of Cleveland, Ohio, and Richmond, Virginia, passed similar resolutions rebuking Daniels and asking for his recall.<sup>15</sup> Both the National Council of Catholic Women and the Massachusetts League of Catholic Foresters sent resolutions to the White House expressing very much the same theme.<sup>16</sup>

Other signs appeared which indicated the growing seriousness with which American Catholics viewed the situation. A public meeting was called in New York City to protest the anticlerical policy of the Mexican Government. Reverend Wilfrid Parsons made the major speech of the evening and

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<sup>13</sup>The Boston Pilot, December 22, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Mary C. Duffy to President Roosevelt, November 8, 1934, Reel 1, Sel. Mat.

<sup>15</sup>Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 209; NCWC News Service, Cleveland, October 20, 1934.

<sup>16</sup>Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 209; The Boston Pilot, January 12, 1935, p. 3.

criticized Ambassador Daniels. Parsons also sounded a note which was to recur during the whole episode. He called on the United States to stop intervening in Mexican affairs as it was doing through its support for the current anti-clerical government. Here was a nice bit of double-think. Realizing the futility of calling for Roosevelt to intervene to help the Church in Mexico, Parsons would avoid this difficulty by calling for a cessation of intervention, both a possible and popular move. The priest pointed to Daniels' endorsement of Calles' speech as evidence that the United States was, in fact, intervening in Mexico.<sup>17</sup> The priest's assertion received support from Reverend Charles C. Coughlin, the radio priest of Detroit. Coughlin told his listeners that the United States Government "from Wilson down to our President Roosevelt, has aided and abetted the rape of Mexico."<sup>18</sup>

What explains the scope and rapidity of protest following Daniels' action? The fact that such a storm of protest followed so quickly the remarks of the Ambassador makes one speculate that American Catholics were anxiously

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<sup>17</sup>New York Times, November 19, 1934, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup>Quoted in The Brooklyn Tablet, December 29, 1934, p. 3.

looking for some reason to voice their growing concern over the persecution of the Church in Mexico. If Daniels had not made his statement, some other excuse would no doubt have been found to release the frustrated feelings of American Catholics. Indeed, as events developed, Daniels himself soon faded into the background as Catholics directed their pressure toward Roosevelt himself, demanding that he intervene in Mexico to stop the persecution of the Church. It was perhaps inevitable that Roosevelt would be dragged into the dispute which arose over Daniels. The Ambassador was the personal friend of the President. Furthermore, as the scope of criticism widened, it was essential to Catholics that the President become the focal point for pressure since he alone could dictate the policy they sought.

One of the first signs that the President would be called upon to enter the dispute was the great volume of mail pouring into Washington from Catholic sources. Most of these letters asked for Daniels' removal and for an end to Mexican anticlericalism. The list of Senators and Representatives asked to take action in this matter is a lengthy one. It included such separate representatives as Senator Francis T. Maloney of Connecticut, Representatives James M. Meade of New York, and Ernest Lundeen of Minnesota. In fact, few

Senators and Representatives were neglected in the surge of protest mail, which came both from individuals and from groups such as the Knights of Columbus. Of course, the fact that a Senator or a Representative presented a petition to Congress did not mean that he was personally committed to the ideas expressed in the petition. Senator Robert Wagner of New York, for one, simply put forward petitions sent to him by his constituents without any supporting remarks. Although some Catholic papers attempted to leave the impression that Wagner was in sympathy with the resolution, such was not the case.<sup>19</sup>

Catholic attempts to exert Congressional pressure on the administration to take action against Mexico received unexpected support from widely respected Senator William E. Borah of Idaho. Borah introduced a resolution in the Senate in late January, calling for an investigation by the foreign relations committee "into the persecution of Christians . . .

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<sup>19</sup>Clipping of The Catholic Telegraph, January 24, 1935, in Box 778, Daniels Papers; The Boston Pilot, January 26, 1934, p. 1; see Official File 28, Roosevelt Papers, for letters of protest. E. David Cronon, in Josephus Daniels in Mexico, calls Wagner "an influential Catholic Democrat." As a matter of fact, Senator Wagner did not become a Catholic until the 1940's. Cronon is also mistaken about the religious affiliation of Rep. John Higgins of Massachusetts, whom he also discusses under the topic of Catholic congressmen.



now being practiced in Mexico." The measure also called for Senate resolutions protesting the "anti-religious campaign" in Mexico.<sup>20</sup> Why Senator Borah, an avid isolationist and non-Catholic, should sponsor a measure so inconsistent with his career is difficult to analyze. When asked to explain his action, Borah said he had evidence that American citizens were "being maltreated" in Mexico. If American citizens were not involved, however, he said "the situation would be different."<sup>21</sup>

Evidence exists that the idea of a resolution originated with Martin H. Carmody, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus. The Knights had visited Congress in early January, 1935, to help put pressure on the Roosevelt administration. A delegation of Knights had met with Representative Higgins and Senator David I. Walsh of Massachusetts. Judge John E. Swift, Massachusetts director of the Knights, reported later that both men promised to be helpful.<sup>22</sup> Walsh, who was in contact with the Apostolic Delegate regarding the

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<sup>20</sup>Quoted in The Catholic World, CXL (March, 1935), 746.

<sup>21</sup>Quoted in The Boston Pilot, February 16, 1935, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup>Newspaper clipping, January 21, 1935, in Scrapbook No. 49, David I. Walsh Papers, Holy Cross College Library, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Vatican's attitude toward Mexico, apparently agreed to approach Borah and ask him to present the resolution. Walsh and Carmody probably felt that the petition would gain more weight if introduced by a widely respected non-Catholic.<sup>23</sup> In any event, Carmody wired to Borah on January 31, 1935, that Walsh had informed him of the former's willingness to sponsor the resolution.<sup>24</sup> The question still remains, however, as to why Borah should be susceptible to Walsh's pressure. One scholar has speculated that this was a payoff for the strong Catholic support Borah had earlier received in defeating the World Court resolution.<sup>25</sup> Whatever his motive, it soon was apparent that Borah was not enthusiastic about the resolution. He failed to defend it vigorously and even refrained from voting for it when it later came up before the committee.

The Catholic press, on the other hand, strongly supported the Borah resolution. Commonweal, generally more

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<sup>23</sup>Clipping of Boston Globe, January 27, 1935, Scrapbook No. 49, David I. Walsh Papers.

<sup>24</sup>Robert E. Quigley to Rev. W. L. Lucey, September 13, 1960, in Letter File, 1935, David I. Walsh Papers. Mr. Quigley, professor of History at LaSalle College, wrote Rev. Lucey, Holy Cross Librarian, and cited Carmody's telegram to Borah of January 31, 1935, in the Borah Papers.

<sup>25</sup>Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 214.

temperate in its statements, supported the congressional attacks on Daniels.<sup>26</sup> The editor of America answered the objection that the Borah resolution would be intervention in Mexico's internal affairs by asserting that "the Mexican question is an American question of the most domestic kind." His reasoning was based on the premise that the United States had put the existing "atheistic" Mexican government in power originally. "An inquiry into religious persecution in Mexico," said the editor, "is an inquiry into our own dealings with Mexico."<sup>27</sup> When it appeared that Roosevelt was not supporting the Borah resolution, The Catholic World wrote that the administration would be more sympathetic "if Methodists or Baptists were suffering in Mexico."<sup>28</sup> Diocesan newspapers also clamored for the passage of the Borah resolution. They generally insisted that Americans had a right to know what was going on in Mexico. The idea that President Roosevelt might be out to kill the resolution led some of these papers to warn that the consequences of such an action

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<sup>26</sup>Commonweal, January 18, 1935, p. 329.

<sup>27</sup>America, February 16, 1935, p. 437; March 2, 1935, p. 487.

<sup>28</sup>The Catholic World, CXL (February, 1935), 523.

might be political alienation.<sup>29</sup>

These newspapers were right in their assessment of President Roosevelt's attitude. The administration viewed the Borah resolution as a gigantic mistake. R. Walton Moore, Undersecretary of State, wrote to Senator Pittman that the measure was "a premature indictment of a friendly neighboring Government." More importantly, Moore said the measure had the effect of permitting the Senate to shape foreign policy "without the aid or advice of the President."<sup>30</sup> Actually there was little danger of the measure being adopted once the President and Cordell Hull let their desires be known.

This set back, however, did not distract some of the more vitriolic critics of Roosevelt's Mexican policy. Representative Clare G. Fenerty of Pennsylvania, Representative Hamilton Fish of New York, and Representative John P. Higgins of Massachusetts kept the drums beating in the House. By June, Higgins was circulating a petition among his colleagues asking for an inquiry into the religious persecution in Mexico. This was the Borah resolution minus Borah.

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<sup>29</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, April 13, 1935, p. 10; The Catholic Herald, April 4, 1935, p. 4; The Boston Pilot, August 31, 1935, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup>R. Walton Moore to Senator Pittman [n.d.], Box 10, Mexico, R. Walton Moore Papers.

Higgins succeeded in obtaining the signature of 242 members of the House to his petition. What this meant in terms of real support is unclear, because various motives were involved in the response. A number of Catholic Representatives were absent from the list. Furthermore, pressure was successfully exerted by other Catholic Representatives, who did sign the petition, to add a footnote saying that the signees were "unalterably opposed to any semblance of . . . intervention in Mexico."<sup>31</sup>

On July 16, 1935, Higgins presented the petition to President Roosevelt at the White House. In its final form, the document deplored the persecution of all Christians and not just the Catholic Church. It asked that Roosevelt inquire about the inability of American citizens to practice their faith in Mexico but rejected any intervention by the United States into the internal affairs of that nation. It appeared that the petitioners really wanted a statement by FDR in which he would publicly disassociate himself from Mexico's antireligious policy.<sup>32</sup> Roosevelt, however, was

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<sup>31</sup>Edward L. Reed to R. Walton Moore, June 21, 1935, Box 10, Moore Papers; Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 219; New York Times, July 17, 1935, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup>New York Times, June 22, 1935, p. 13; July 17, 1935, p. 1.

aware that the main question remained the status of the Catholic Church under the current Mexican government. In answer to the petition, he issued a statement saying he was in sympathy with those who "make it clear that the American people and the Government believe in freedom of religious worship not only in the United States, but also in other nations."<sup>33</sup>

The Catholic press was happy to play up the President's remark as a forthright call for a cessation of religious persecution in Mexico. A large number of diocesan papers carried verbatim reports of the President's statement.<sup>34</sup> The NCWC News Service sent out a story with the explanatory note that President Roosevelt's remarks must be construed as a protest against Mexico's antireligious campaign. This protest was, according to this source, the motive behind the petition.<sup>35</sup> The Denver Catholic Register thanked FDR "for breaking the silence on the persecution of Catholics in Mexico," and confidently predicted an "official protest from Washington to Cardenas." Such a protest, the

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<sup>33</sup>Rosenman, Public Papers, IV, 305.

<sup>34</sup>P. H. Callahan to James A. Farley, August 1, 1935, Box 778, Daniels Papers.

<sup>35</sup>NCWC News Service, July 22, 1935.

editor felt, would have a telling effect.<sup>36</sup> The Commonweal applauded the President's statement and suggested that this attitude might lead to a "Kellogg Pact" type of international agreement by all nations "pledging freedom of religious worship."<sup>37</sup> The editors of America said that when FDR issued his statement, "a major objective of our campaign on Mexico was achieved."<sup>38</sup> Altogether, the congressional petition seemed to have produced satisfactory results.

Not all Catholics, however, were satisfied with this settlement. Existing concurrently with congressional pressure were the efforts being made by the Knights of Columbus. Indeed, the Knights represented the most serious Catholic effort to have Roosevelt intervene in Mexico. The Knights' activities began on January 13, 1935, when the Supreme Board met in New York City and adopted a resolution attacking the Mexican Government as being "opposed to religion, morality, justice, and liberty." The resolution further declared that the anticlericalism in Mexico meant that this nation had "forfeited its rights to further association with our government. . . ." As a consequence of this feeling, the Supreme

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<sup>36</sup>July 18, 1935, p. 1.      <sup>37</sup>July 26, 1935, p. 316.

<sup>38</sup>July 27, 1935, p. 362.

Board, in the name of 500,000 Knights, petitioned the Roosevelt administration

. . . to make representations to the government of Mexico, that unless the evils . . . are ended forthwith, further recognition of the Mexican government will be withdrawn and diplomatic relations . . . will be severed.<sup>39</sup>

These statements were the opening broadside in a campaign by the Knights which would last throughout 1935. The major protagonist in the Knights' effort was Martin H. Carmody of New Haven, Connecticut. Carmody was the Supreme Knight of the organization, and was characterized by one observer as "a life-long Republican."<sup>40</sup> Early in January, 1935, Carmody and a committee of Knights sought a private interview with the President to press their case. Their argument at that time, and throughout the dispute, incorporated all the stock phrases used by Catholics to attack the Mexican government and gives little indication of original or personal investigation. Roosevelt demurred from meeting the Knights at this time, claiming the press of public business, and referred them to Cordell Hull and the State Department. After meeting with the Secretary for an hour, the Knights

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<sup>39</sup>Quoted in The Boston Pilot, January 26, 1935, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup>P. H. Callahan to Stephen B. Gibbons, August 8, 1935, Box 778, Daniels Papers.



emerged and termed the talk "very satisfactory." From here they visited Senators Pittman, Wagner, and David Walsh, undoubtedly to coordinate the congressional petitions on Mexico.<sup>41</sup>

Roosevelt, however, was mistaken if he felt he could placate Carmody and company by having Hull assure them of the United States' continued interest in religious freedom. By April, 1935, Carmody was writing Roosevelt again. In his letter, the Supreme Knight pointed out that no action had been taken on the January resolution passed by the Knights. He reminded the President that conditions in Mexico had grown worse since that time and that women and children were being subjected to persecution for their faith. Carmody requested a private conference with Roosevelt as soon as possible to discuss the matter. Before FDR had time to reply another letter of May 3, arrived from Carmody. In this second letter, Carmody was acting under authorization of the Supreme Board of Directors who, meeting in Detroit in early May, had apparently been stirred to action by the May 1 statement of the American bishops on the Mexican situation. Carmody now complained about Roosevelt's disregard for the prior petitions

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<sup>41</sup>NCWC News Service, January 22, 1935.

of the Knights, explained that conditions in Mexico were getting worse, and deplored the apparent opposition of the administration to the Borah resolution. The Supreme Knight also insisted that there was clear precedent for intervention in such a case of religious persecution as was now occurring in Mexico.<sup>42</sup>

Roosevelt referred Carmody's second letter to the State Department for preparation of a suitable reply. By May 11, Assistant Secretary of State Moore had drawn up a reply for the President's signature. Moore stressed that the United States had no more right to intervene in the case of Church-State relations than it had in any other domestic Mexican question. In an attempt to explain United States policy, he referred to the "Convention on the Rights and Duties of States" signed at Montevideo, December 26, 1933. At this meeting Secretary Hull, acting for the United States, had voted for the article forbidding one state from intervening in the affairs of another. Indeed, concluded Moore, Carmody's proposal went against the entire tenor of the "Good Neighbor" policy Roosevelt was attempting to implement toward Latin America. It was decided by the White House

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<sup>42</sup>The Catholic World, CXLI (June, 1935) , 364.

that Hull, rather than Roosevelt, should sign this reply to Carmody.<sup>43</sup>

Carmody and the Knights of Columbus were not so easily satisfied. On June 23, Carmody again wrote to the President and stressed his disappointment over Roosevelt's refusal to acknowledge the earlier telegram. Carmody also regretted that he was unable to see the President personally and lamented the fate of the Borah resolution.<sup>44</sup> After this communication, Roosevelt apparently decided that something had to be done to satisfy the Knights. He sent Carmody's latest note to Hull with the following memorandum: "For preparation of reply for my signature as quickly as possible, as I think that speed is essential."<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, the State Department was feeling direct pressure over the Mexican question from the Knights and other Catholic groups. This prompted Assistant Secretary Moore to write to Hull that, although they must refrain from any action offensive to Mexico, if they did not make some

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<sup>43</sup>Memorandum of May 11, 1935, by Assistant Secretary of State, Official File 146, Mexico, 1933-40, Box 1, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>44</sup>Martin Carmody to President Roosevelt, June 23, 1935, Official File 28, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., June 26, 1935.

statement "fairly satisfactory" to the Catholic interest, "the political effect may be injurious in many localities." Moore felt that there would be no harm in making a reply to indicate that the State Department did "honestly regret the situation in Mexico." With this in mind, Moore submitted a draft reply to Catholic inquiries which made the following points: (1) There was no treaty between the United States and Mexico covering religion. (2) The United States had always demanded religious freedom for its nationals within its jurisdiction. (3) The United States had no power to act in this case, since it would be an unwarranted intervention in Mexico's domestic affairs.<sup>46</sup>

A few days after receiving this recommendation from his Assistant Secretary, Cordell Hull also received FDR's request for a reply to Martin Carmody's new letter. After consultation with James Farley, who recommended that the Knights be ignored for their discourtesy, Hull submitted a draft reply which the President on July 3 sent to Carmody. Apparently Hull had decided not to incorporate Moore's recommendations into this reply because, in its final form,

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<sup>46</sup>R. Walton Moore to Secretary Hull, June 24, 1935, Mexican Religious Situation, Box 10, R. Walton Moore Papers.

the letter simply explained to Carmody that pressing public business had prevented a private audience earlier, but that now the President would be glad to meet and discuss the Mexican situation with him.<sup>47</sup>

After some preliminaries, a meeting was arranged for July 8 between the President and a delegation of Knights, including Carmody, William J. McGinley, secretary, D. J. Callahan, treasurer, Luke E. Hart, advocate, John E. Swift, and James Donahoe. The delegation declared that they represented not merely the 500,000 Knights but all American Catholics. They reiterated their plea that the President protest the persecution going on in Mexico and brought up many precedents in which the United States had spoken out under similar circumstances. Roosevelt listened with his usual patience and good manners. He made a few remarks about religious conditions in the world and about communism, but was noncommittal regarding the particular subject of the Knights' visit. The group left, reporting to the press that the President was very courteous and generous with his time.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Memorandum of Secretary of State, June 26, 1935, Mexico, 1933-40, Official File, Box 1, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>48</sup>Columbia, August, 1935, p. 4; New York Times, July 9, 1935, p. 6.

It should be noted that it was only eight days after this visit that President Roosevelt met with the congressional delegation on the same topic and issued his statement on religious freedom.

Roosevelt's statement to the congressional delegation did little to placate the Knights of Columbus. As reports continued to flow into the United States of atrocities against Christians in Mexico, the Knights met at their annual convention in New York City on August 21. One of their first actions was to authorize Carmody to send another letter to President Roosevelt concerning Mexico. In the same unanimous resolution, the Knights expressed regret at the administration's passivity toward the question and disappointment that the State Department, with the President's approval, was opposing the Borah resolution.<sup>49</sup> This outburst, however, was only a small indication of what was to come from the Knights on the subject of Mexico.

In early October, a quarterly meeting of the Supreme Board of Directors of the Knights was held in Chicago. At this meeting it was decided to make another vigorous representation to the President on the Mexican situation. A

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<sup>49</sup>Columbia, October, 1935, p. 17; New York Times, August 22, 1935, p. 15.

letter of protest was drawn up here but was not sent until Roosevelt returned from an extended trip late in the month. Signed by Carmody and by W. J. McGinley, the letter traced the events since the July 8 meeting with the President. At this time, said the Knights, President Roosevelt promised to make a public statement deploring the Mexican religious situation. It was noted that FDR had made a statement favoring religious freedom on October 2 in San Diego, California. At that time Roosevelt had said:

Our national determination to keep us free of . . . foreign entanglements cannot prevent us from feeling deep concern when ideals and principles that we have cherished are challenged. We regard it as axiomatic that every person shall enjoy the free exercise of his religion according to the dictates of his conscience. . . .<sup>50</sup>

Many newspapers suggested that this statement, because it was made near the Mexican border, was a reply to the Knights' request and was directed against Mexico. Carmody and company, however, were more inclined to accept one reporter's opinion that the speech was "a small sop to the Catholics." Indeed, Carmody not only accepted this interpretation, but added that our "Good Neighbor" policy could not excuse

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<sup>50</sup>Quoted in Denver Catholic Register, October 3, 1935, p. 4, whose editor praised the statement as an answer to the Knight's charge of Presidential indifference.

inaction. In a tone of surprising bitterness, Carmody concluded his letter:

You cannot escape responsibility for throttling the Borah Resolution. You cannot escape responsibility for the endorsement given to the Mexican Government . . . by your Ambassador. You cannot escape responsibility for non-action on behalf of bleeding and oppressed Mexico.<sup>51</sup>

The tone of this latest outburst by the Knights embarrassed many Catholics. Most Reverend John J. McNicholas, Archbishop of Cincinnati, felt compelled to issue a public statement, read in all churches of his archdiocese on November 3, that the Knights "in no sense speak for the priesthood or for the Catholic laity" of Cincinnati. This response was made even though the Archbishop himself felt the administration could have done more to ameliorate the Mexican situation.<sup>52</sup>

Taking note of this divided sentiment, the President, after consultation with Catholics close to the administration such as Jim Farley and Frank Walker, replied to the October attack of the Knights. In a letter addressed to Carmody and dated November 13, Roosevelt flatly refused to interfere in

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<sup>51</sup>Quoted in Columbia, December, 1935, p. 11; New York Times, October 28, 1935, p. 3.

<sup>52</sup>Quoted in The Catholic World, CXLII (December, 1935), 362.



the domestic affairs of Mexico. As for United States citizens in Mexico, the administration desired that they should be permitted freedom of worship. But, Roosevelt went on, "there has not been brought to this government during the past year a single complaint by any United States citizen that such opportunities in Mexico have been refused him." In light of this, Roosevelt insisted that his policy of non-intervention would continue. This, however, did not mean that he was unsympathetic to the cause of religious tolerance. Roosevelt quoted from his recent speech in San Diego regarding his "deep concern" for religious freedom. Obviously the President was deeply committed to such freedom, but he did not feel that this was a justification for intervening in the domestic affairs of a foreign nation.<sup>53</sup>

For Roosevelt this letter represented the final word in the episode. Catholics, however, had different ideas. The Catholic press was almost unanimous in its criticism of Roosevelt's reply to Carmody. The Brooklyn Tablet, predictably critical, pointed out that Catholics had asked Roosevelt to end intervention, not start it.<sup>54</sup> The Catholic Action of

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<sup>53</sup>President Roosevelt to Martin Carmody, November 13, 1935, in Rosenman, Public Papers, IV, 450-52; Commonweal, November 29, 1935, pp. 113-14.

<sup>54</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, November 23, 1935, p. 1.

the South, a New Orleans paper, felt that Roosevelt's attitude could only give comfort to the enemies of religion. The Baltimore Catholic Review said that FDR was condoning tyranny. The Catholic Tribune of St. Joseph, Missouri, remarked that Catholics should have expected a refusal because of Roosevelt's past actions. The Providence Visitor called Roosevelt's reply mere "political hedging" and reiterated the Knight's claim that the President could not escape much of the responsibility for current conditions in Mexico. Light, a publication of the International Catholic Truth Society, insisted that FDR should make Mexico honor the pledge of religious freedom given to Woodrow Wilson. This paper called Roosevelt's reply to Carmody mere "artful weaving of words."<sup>55</sup> Reverend Wilfrid Parsons, editor of America, insisted that Roosevelt's letter would give a "green light" to those elements in Mexico most antagonistic toward the Church. Unfortunately, the President had intervened even while refusing to do so, said Parsons, and the result was to give "comfort to the enemies of religion."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>In Albany, New York; Hartford, Connecticut; St. Louis, Missouri; Buffalo, New York; Portland, Maine; and Rochester, New York, the Catholic diocesan press echoed these criticisms of the President and at times went even further. See Columbia, January, 1936, p. 18, which published a resume of Catholic press reaction.

<sup>56</sup>New York Times, November 19, 1935, p. 7.

In retrospect it appears that President Roosevelt had little chance of appeasing these elements of Catholic thought. They insisted that what they wanted was not intervention, but a cessation of the interference then taking place. Unfortunately, they could point to no specific action by the Roosevelt administration, save Ambassador Daniel's statement, which could be termed intervention. It is difficult to imagine what more they desired in the way of a public statement by the President if they were not satisfied with his San Diego remarks. In his reply to the President, Carmody used the same argument--that he had never asked for intervention, only an investigation of charges of oppression. How this investigation was to be accomplished without intervention, he did not specify. Carmody's reply, in the form of a public statement to the press, was made November 17, 1935, in New York City, when the Supreme Knight insisted that Roosevelt had ignored good precedent for speaking out against foreign religious persecution.<sup>57</sup> After another month had elapsed, Carmody wrote to the President again. On December 16, he accused Roosevelt of distorting history to support his

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<sup>57</sup>New York Times, November 18, 1935, p. 1; The Catholic World, CXLII (December, 1935), 362-63; Columbia, December, 1935, p. 13.

position of non-intervention. The Knights concluded that FDR's reasons for not acting in this case were "based upon a false premise," namely, that the Knights desired actual physical intervention.<sup>58</sup>

This final outburst by the Knights was referred from the White House to Sumner Welles of the State Department. Welles examined the letter and wrote to the President that it did not deserve a reply, because "it raises no new questions." He further presented a detailed memorandum showing that the supposed incidents of persecution of Americans in Mexico mentioned by Carmody had nothing to do with the religious situation. Roosevelt replied that Welles was correct to assume that Carmody would not be answered and that he and Steve Early were treating the subject as "a closed incident."<sup>59</sup>

Roosevelt's trouble with the Knights of Columbus, however, was only one aspect of the pressure exerted against his administration in connection with Mexican anticlericalism. Equally important were the feelings of members of the Catholic hierarchy. While all of the bishops were not articulate

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<sup>58</sup>Columbia, January, 1935, p. 6.

<sup>59</sup>Sumner Welles to President Roosevelt, December 21, 1935, Official File, Box 28, Roosevelt Papers.

about the Mexican situation, there was enough public criticism to cause some uneasiness in the administration. Ambassador Daniels had been directly rebuked by Bishop William J. Hafey of Raleigh, North Carolina, on October 6, 1934, when the latter publicly regretted the remarks the former made about Mexican education and hoped they were unintentional. Yet the Bishop felt this "serious error" deserved a public refutation by Roosevelt, so it would not appear that his administration was endorsing Mexican atheism.<sup>60</sup>

Other members of the hierarchy seemed to be in sympathy with Bishop Hafey. At an annual meeting in Washington, D.C., November 14-17, 1934, some seventy-eight members of the American Catholic hierarchy issued a statement on the "anti-Christian Tyranny in Mexico." "We cannot but deplore," read the statement, "the expressions, unwittingly offered at times, of sympathy with and support of governments and policies which are absolutely at variance with our own American principles." After this jibe at Daniels, the bishops went on to say that they did not "believe for a moment" that the United States favored the actions of Mexico. While the hierarchy praised American principles of toleration

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<sup>60</sup>Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 209.

and freedom, they did not wish "to impose those principles as political principles upon any other nation," even though they were "as true outside as inside the physical territory of our country." With this in mind they called for an end to the indifference with which the United States viewed the Mexican situation and urged citizens to press their representatives to "be guided by true American principles with respect to Mexico."<sup>61</sup>

In February, 1935, further episcopal action was forthcoming. An organization called "The Catholic Bishops Commission, Incorporated, for Mexican Relief" was formed under the leadership of such men as Archbishop Michael J. Curley of Baltimore, Bishop Francis C. Kelley of Oklahoma City and Tulsa, and Archbishop Arthur J. Crosserts of San Antonio, Texas. Other prominent prelates who lent their support to the organization included Bishop John M. Gannon of Erie, Pennsylvania, and Bishop James A. Griffin of Springfield, Illinois. This commission was not directed against the administration, but was primarily concerned with soliciting aid and assistance "for the relief and support" of Mexicans suffering under the antireligious laws of their country.

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<sup>61</sup>"Statement of American Catholic Hierarchy," November 15, 1934, in Huber, Our Bishops Speak, pp. 205-208.

Still, a campaign directed toward raising money "for the defense of religious freedom in Mexico" was treading upon international diplomacy and could not help but come under the scrutiny of the United States State Department.<sup>62</sup>

Other members of the hierarchy also spoke out. In February, Cardinal Dougherty of Philadelphia sponsored a mass protest meeting in his diocese against the "anti-God" actions of the Mexican government.<sup>63</sup> In Springfield, Illinois, Bishop James A. Griffin outlined four objectives for American Catholics in the controversy. One of these was to awaken public opinion in the United States in favor of an official investigation into Mexican actions.<sup>64</sup>

Unquestionably the most outspoken member of the American hierarchy on the Mexican question was Archbishop Michael J. Curley of Baltimore. In an open letter to the Washington Post, Curley defended the Borah resolution as a legitimate inquiry which deserved the sponsorship of the Roosevelt administration.<sup>65</sup> A few weeks later, the Bishop,

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<sup>62</sup>The Catholic World, CXLII (March, 1936), 747-48; Commonweal, February 7, 1936, p. 411.

<sup>63</sup>NCWC News Service, Philadelphia, February 19, 1935.

<sup>64</sup>Commonweal, March 29, 1935, p. 625.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., March 1, 1935, p. 510.

addressing a public gathering in Washington, deplored the attitude of the President toward the resolution. "If that resolution is killed," said Curley, "it will be because the Chief Executive of the nation has issued orders that it be killed." These were rather strong words, but Curley was not finished. In a statement which carried overtones of a political threat, the clergyman remarked, "twenty million American Catholics are getting pretty tired of the indifference shown by the Administration." Despite a further reference to the "Catholic vote," Curley denied he was threatening anyone. He went on to criticize the President for refusing to grant an interview to a delegation of Knights of Columbus which had attempted to call upon him. He castigated the foreign policy of Cordell Hull as being against all American traditions. Finally, he insisted, somewhat naively, that a mere word from President Roosevelt would suffice to relieve the anticlerical pressure in Mexico.<sup>66</sup> Despite the prominence of the speaker and the proximity of the speech, the Roosevelt administration took no official notice.

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<sup>66</sup>New York Times, March 26, 1935, p. 1; Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 220; W. T. Walsh, "Some Precedents for the Borah Resolution," The Catholic World, CXLI (August, 1935), 555.



The significance of Curley's outburst was that it represented a hardening of episcopal opinion toward the Mexican question. This shift was underlined by the May 1 public statement of the Administrative Committee of the NCWC. These bishops, speaking for the American hierarchy, requested that Washington speak out on Mexican anticlericalism. "The traditional policy of our Government," read the Committee's statement, "does not permit it to remain silent at the present moment. . . ." They admitted that we could not "interfere with the internal affairs of another nation," but pointed out that the United States had never been silent regarding such a basic principle as religious freedom. They concluded by promising to continue to urge Catholics to petition Congress and the President to use their influence to restore religious liberty to Mexico.<sup>67</sup> In furtherance of this attitude, Bishop Charles D. White of Spokane, Washington, circulated a petition for signature among the laity of his diocese requesting the President and the Secretary of State "to exercise every personal and governmental power possible to relieve the injustices and to avert the threatened dangers

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<sup>67</sup>Huber, Our Bishops Speak, p. 307; The Catholic World, CXLI (June, 1935), 363-64.

of the present anti-religious policy of the Mexican Government."<sup>68</sup>

To lend additional emphasis to the Bishops' statement on May 1, Bishop John F. Noll of Fort Wayne, Indiana, a member of the Administrative Committee, wrote President Roosevelt a personal letter on Mexico. Noll reminded the President that he had been informed by Reverend John Burke, General Secretary of the NCWC and liaison man to the administration, that "it would be difficult to keep the Catholics quiet" if the Catholic hierarchy was "completely ignored." The Bishop recalled for Roosevelt that the statement by the American hierarchy had made no mention of the Borah resolution or the petition by the Knights of Columbus. The bishops, said Noll, approved these statements but had refrained from speaking out in order "to give your Excellency an opportunity to do something with less embarrassment." Now Noll asked Roosevelt to make a statement "on the general principles of the rights of all people to religious liberty." Such a statement, he insisted, would be of great help to all oppressed peoples and was certainly within the historical precedents of the United States. Finally, such a statement

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<sup>68</sup>NCWC News Service, Spokane, Washington, May 6, 1935.

would also end the rumors of FDR's growing sympathy for communism.<sup>69</sup>

Roosevelt was obviously impressed with the earnestness of Noll's letter. When drafting a reply, he called in Father John Burke for advice. Burke composed a letter for the President's examination and Roosevelt signed it virtually unchanged. In the letter Roosevelt once again asserted his own "devotion" to religious liberty and promised that the cause of the Bishop's letter would "receive our earnest, thoughtful attention." The President closed by promising to do all he could "to promote the principle of freedom of conscience and the exercise of religious liberty." Significantly, Mexico was not mentioned once in the letter, but Roosevelt did stress the complexity and delicacy of foreign affairs.<sup>70</sup>

All members of the Catholic hierarchy, however, were not so intent as Noll upon soliciting a statement from President Roosevelt. Indeed the clergyman closest to the scene of conflict, Archbishop Pascual Diaz of Mexico City, expressed

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<sup>69</sup>Bishop John F. Noll to President Roosevelt, May 13, 1935, President's Personal File, No. 2406, Roosevelt Papers; see also Reel 2, Sel. Mat.

<sup>70</sup>President Roosevelt to Bishop John Noll, May 23, 1935, Reel 2, Sel. Mat.

the opinion that nothing could be worse than for the President of the United States to make a statement demanding an investigation of Mexican affairs. "Such an action," said the Archbishop, "would be very injurious to the interest of the Church in Mexico" and he personally would never condone such a step. The Archbishop also expressed the personal opinion that Secretary of State Hull was doing a great job "and thoroughly approved of what he had and was doing to prevent an investigation into Mexican affairs."<sup>71</sup>

In the United States, Bishop Schrembs of Cleveland was not so much interested in Roosevelt's Mexican policy as he was in the possibility that the President might consent to appear before a Eucharistic Congress being held in his diocese. Representative Martin L. Sweeney of Cleveland, Ohio, was asked by Schrembs to try to convince Roosevelt to appear before the Congress. Sweeney wrote to the President that all Catholics were impressed by his July statement on religious liberty, but the Eucharistic Congress would present a perfect forum for a public address on the same topic.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Memorandum of private conversation between Mr. Aguirre and Archbishop Pascual Diaz, Mexico City, April 13, 1935, Box 777, Daniels Papers.

<sup>72</sup>Rep. Martin L. Sweeney to President Roosevelt, August 12, 1935, Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

Roosevelt decided to limit his participation to a message of greetings and good will, which was delivered by his delegate to the Congress, Jim Farley. This message was apparently enough to satisfy Cardinal Hayes of New York, who, after deploring the religious persecution occurring in other countries, expressed delight over the President's greeting. Hayes was moved to remark that, "we have a President who believes in religion and wants his fellow citizens to do likewise." Farley himself remarked that the United States had set an example of religious toleration, but that other nations failed to appreciate this lesson.<sup>73</sup> Bishop Schrembs, the host of the Congress, was also gratified by Roosevelt's contribution and wrote to the President that his "appeal in the cause of religion" had made a success of the entire affair.<sup>74</sup>

As one observes over-all Catholic opinion at this time, it appears that the good feeling manifest over the Eucharistic Congress was a mere lull in the criticism of the administration by Catholic spokesmen. Most public spokesmen for the Church remained angered by the President's failure to take

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<sup>73</sup>Quoted in New York Times, September 24, 1935, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup>Most Rev. Joseph Schrembs to President Roosevelt, October 2, 1935, Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

more vigorous action toward Mexico. Some expressed regret that the statements of Hayes and Schrembs, and later the criticism of the Knights by Archbishop McNicholas of Cincinnati, represented a division in the force of Catholic opinion.<sup>75</sup> Large elements of the Catholic press were vitriolic in their criticism of the administration.<sup>76</sup>

Prominent individual Catholics and Catholic organizations also contributed to the rising clamor against the administration. Reverend James Gillis, editor of The Catholic World, was disgusted with the procrastination of Roosevelt. Gillis felt that the United States had a mission to "champion the cause of those who suffer persecution for conscience sake."<sup>77</sup> He wanted full-fledged intervention in Mexico. Reverend William J. Kenealy, S.J., speaking on the Catholic Truth Period over Boston Radio, also stressed the

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<sup>75</sup>Catholic Transcript, December 19, 1935, p. 4; The Brooklyn Tablet, November 23, 1935, p. 8.

<sup>76</sup>For evidence of the position of the Catholic press see Pax, December, 1935, p. 81; Extension, December, 1935, p. 17; Columbia, May, 1935, p. 12; Commonweal, January 18, 1935, p. 329; The Boston Pilot, November 23, 1935, p. 4; The Catholic Transcript, May 2, 1935, p. 4; The New World, May 17, 1935, p. 4; The Catholic Messenger, June 20, 1935, p. 2; and The Brooklyn Tablet, July 13, 1935, p. 9, all of which attack either Daniels' incompetence or Roosevelt's timidity.

<sup>77</sup>The Catholic World, CXLII (March, 1936), 641-46.

United States' responsibility for anticlericalism in Mexico. According to Kenealy, the Roosevelt administration was keeping the Mexican "atheists" in power by virtue of diplomatic recognition, and by financial and moral support.<sup>78</sup> Reverend G. A. McDonald published an open letter to President Roosevelt in the pages of The Queen's Work, in which he criticized the administration's handling of Catholic protest over Mexico.<sup>79</sup>

A few individuals were especially extreme in their criticism. Father Kenealy, not satisfied with his radio speech, wrote an article for The Catholic Mind in which he proposed that the United States Government should "stop preventing them [the Mexican people] from securing religious and political freedom."<sup>80</sup> But perhaps the height of hysteria was reached by Reverend Michael Kenny, S.J., author of No God Next Door. Kenny wrote that the Supreme Masonic Councils of Mexico and the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite 33rd Degree in Washington were influential in the refusal of

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<sup>78</sup>The Boston Pilot, August 31, 1935.

<sup>79</sup>Copy of The Queen's Work, December 13, 1935, in Official File, 28, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>80</sup>Rev. William J. Kenealy, S.J., "The Mexican Religious Persecution," The Catholic Mind, XXXIII, No. 23 (December 8, 1935), 453, 454, 457.

President Roosevelt to intervene in Mexico. It seems that Roosevelt was a 32nd degree Mason and had just initiated his two sons into masonry. Father Kenny read conspiracy into these events.<sup>81</sup>

Against this seemingly widespread Catholic disillusionment with Roosevelt's Mexican policy was arrayed a number of individuals who attempted to defend both Ambassador Daniels and the President. There were some who sought to counteract the charges made by the Knights of Columbus and the diocesan press. Foremost among these was Colonel P. H. Callahan, an influential Catholic layman, and former executive of the Knights of Columbus. Callahan, a native of Louisville, Kentucky, was a prohibitionist and, like Daniels,

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<sup>81</sup>Rev. Michael Kenny, S.J., to the Editor, Commonweal, December 20, 1935, p. 213. These individual protest were supplemented by appeals made by the following Catholic organizations who demanded everything from U.S. intervention to the removal of Daniels: The Ancient Order of Hibernians; National Catholic Women's Union of Hudson County, New Jersey; The Supreme Board of the Catholic Daughters of America; St. Louis Council of Catholic Women; and a number of others. Lay Catholics such as Joseph Gurn and Dr. Thomas E. Purcell, President of the NCCM, spoke out against recognition of a "communist-dominated" Mexican government and suggested that the Good Neighbor policy be used as a pretext for intervention to help Mexican Catholics. See the following: New York Times, May 6, 1935, p. 16; February 23, 1936, II, 1; Box 777, Daniels Papers, NCWC News Service, St. Louis, Missouri, May 11, 1935; Washington, D. C., March 8, 1935; Union City, New Jersey, April 5, 1935.



an old supporter of William Jennings Bryan. He quickly became convinced that the efforts by American Catholics to have Daniels removed and to have Roosevelt intervene in Mexico could only hurt the Church's position in that country. Furthermore, Callahan warned, if Catholics succeeded in removing Daniels it would produce a reaction by American Protestants, resentful of this show of political power, that would make the Smith campaign look insignificant.<sup>82</sup>

As soon as Daniels was attacked for his remarks on Mexican education, Callahan began a campaign to defend the Ambassador against the charges of the Catholic press. He wrote to such individuals as A. J. Beck, editor of The Michigan Catholic; Patrick F. Scanlan, editor of The Brooklyn Tablet; Vincent de Paul Fitzpatrick, editor of The Baltimore Catholic Review; and Joseph M. Schifferli, editor of The Buffalo Echo of New York. Callahan pointed out that Josephus Daniels had no religious prejudice. In fact the Ambassador had been extremely generous to Catholics during World War I, in the number of chaplains he allotted to each faith when he was Secretary of the Navy. Daniels had not, insisted Callahan, endorsed pagan education. As for the Ambassador

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<sup>82</sup>P. H. Callahan to H. L. Mencken, December 21, 1934, Box 778, Daniels Papers.

shaking hands with Calles, what else could be expected from a representative of the United States Government? "Some of our co-religious," wrote Callahan, "expected the Ambassador to conduct himself as if he were representing the Vatican at Rome instead of the U.S.A."<sup>83</sup>

The Colonel constantly sent copies of his correspondence to the White House and the State Department. He also wrote directly to the administration during the height of the pressure campaign by the Knights of Columbus. According to Callahan, Carmody and the Supreme Council did not represent a majority of the Knights in their opposition to Roosevelt. He also indicated that Carmody and Luke Hart were life-long Republicans. Callahan suggested to Jim Farley that Carmody's actions were probably connected with the "plans of Al Smith."<sup>84</sup> It is difficult to determine specifically how this information was used by the administration, although Secretary of State Hull wrote to Callahan that he had "utilized

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<sup>83</sup>p. H. Callahan to Patrick F. Scanlan, February 27, 1935, for other letters see "Callahan Correspondence" in Reel 2, Sel. Mat. Many of the Callahan letters were published by the diocesan press.

<sup>84</sup>p. H. Callahan to Stephen B. Gibbons, August 8, 1935; Callahan to James A. Farley, November 9, 1935; Callahan to James McCaughey [n.d.], Box 778, Daniels Papers.

them [the letters] to good advantage."<sup>85</sup>

Another prominent Catholic layman who assisted the administration in counteracting unfavorable opinion in the Church was Michael Francis Doyle, a Philadelphia lawyer and active Democratic politician. Although in some respects Doyle appears to have been a sycophant of the President, he did strive to counteract Catholic criticism. As soon as it appeared that Daniels was in for a roasting by the Catholic press, Doyle wrote to the administration seeking evidence of the Ambassador's pro-Catholic attitude while Secretary of the Navy.<sup>86</sup> He intended to see that this material was placed in the press. Doyle also wrote of having "conferences" with the NCWC, and the Catholic Alumni Sodality, and of stifling their criticism of the administration. Roosevelt and Daniels were both assured that the attitude of the Knights of Columbus and of Archbishop Curley "did not reflect the general attitude of American Catholics" who "fully appreciated [Daniels] splendid qualities and . . . belief in religious toleration."<sup>87</sup> The Philadelphian claimed to be

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<sup>85</sup>Cordell Hull to P. H. Callahan, February 15, 1935, Box 778, Daniels Papers.

<sup>86</sup>Michael F. Doyle to Louis Howe, December 26, 1934, Official File 237, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>87</sup>Michael F. Doyle to Josephus Daniels, January 24, 1935, Box 777, Daniels Papers.

working within various Catholic groups, hoping to moderate their demands for the Borah resolution. One such group was the Catholic Association for International Peace--Doyle succeeded in removing a discussion of Mexico from the agenda of their annual meeting for 1936.<sup>88</sup>

Indeed, Doyle appears to have been more concerned over the attitude of American Catholics toward the administration than was Roosevelt himself. After FDR had answered the Knights of Columbus in his November letter, Doyle reported the formation of the "Catholic Bishops Commission for Mexican Relief."<sup>89</sup> Doyle wrote to Marvin McIntyre that "I fully understand the Administration's attitude and will do everything in my power to see that this movement is not used for any political purpose."<sup>90</sup> It should be noted, however, that President Roosevelt did not appear unduly affected by the letters Doyle wrote. The President saw Doyle only once at the beginning of the Daniels affair, despite the latter's pleading for more audiences.

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<sup>88</sup>Michael F. Doyle to Josephus Daniels, March 6, 1935; April 17, 1936, Box 778, Daniels Papers.

<sup>89</sup>See p. 281.

<sup>90</sup>Michael F. Doyle to Marvin McIntyre, November 27, 1935, Reel 1, Sel. Mat.

Of more importance to Roosevelt was the work done by Reverend John J. Burke, General Secretary of the NCWC. Burke was respected at the White House; Roosevelt often called upon him to interpret and even answer letters from the hierarchy. Throughout the Mexican crisis this priest was sympathetic to both Roosevelt and Daniels.<sup>91</sup> One typical example of his help came when Cardinal Hayes of New York, in mid-1935, expressed his disappointment that the President had not asserted himself in favor of religious freedom in Mexico. Burke immediately set the record straight and told Hayes all that Roosevelt had done and was attempting to do within the bounds of diplomatic protocol. The Cardinal must have been impressed, for he wrote to Burke apologizing for his ignorance and expressing appreciation for Roosevelt's efforts. Although Burke seems to have had little control over the Knights of Columbus, he continually criticized their actions toward the President.<sup>92</sup>

There were other Catholics who braved the apparent mainstream of Catholic feeling on Mexico to defend the

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<sup>91</sup>Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 226.

<sup>92</sup>Sumner Welles, Asst. Secretary of State, to President Roosevelt, June 25, 1935, President's Secretary File I, Diplomatic Correspondence, Mexico, Box 2, Roosevelt Papers.

administration and Ambassador Daniels. Judge Martin T. Manton of New York City was one. Manton spoke out at the March, 1935, annual convention of the Catholic Association for International Peace held in Washington. In his speech he deprecated the Borah resolution as a violation of the Montevideo Convention of 1934 and suggested that the Church-State dispute in Mexico be handled by the Permanent Court of International Justice. For implying that American Catholics should stop attacking the administration, Manton was soundly rebuked by such leading prelates as Reverend John LaFarge, Reverend J. F. Thorning, and Archbishop Curley. Thorning insisted that Mexico was attacking United States citizens, but the administration was keeping this news from the people. Curley simply called Manton ignorant of both the Mexican situation and of the position of American Catholics. One Catholic editor not only applauded Curley's attack but suggested that Manton get permission of his bishop before making any more public pronouncements on the situation. To some, it seems, the affair had entered the realm of faith and morals.<sup>93</sup>

Reverend John F. O'Hara, president of Notre Dame

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<sup>93</sup>Commonweal, May 10, 1937, p. 44; The Catholic Transcript, May 9, 1935, p. 4.

University, was another prominent Catholic leader who refused to follow the line laid down by Bishop Curley and the Knights of Columbus. In a public interview in December, 1934, O'Hara said: "Anything like an attempt at intervention by the U.S. in the internal affairs of Mexico would be distasteful to all Latin American countries, and would result in more harm than good."<sup>94</sup> He also wrote Daniels of the "cherished and affectionate regard" he had for him. Secretary Hull received word from O'Hara on how much the latter regretted "the misunderstanding" between Daniels and American Catholics. These same thoughts O'Hara conveyed to Daniels himself.<sup>95</sup>

Some elements of the Catholic press actually took a pro-Roosevelt stand. In Chicago, Cardinal Mundelein's The New World admitted that Daniels was not qualified for his post but also stressed that Catholics had no right to demand his resignation. Indeed, those who did so only succeeded in making themselves appear "rather ridiculous." Daniels was "in no sense anti-Catholic," but the current actions by some misguided souls might turn him against the Church. Daniels was in Mexico to represent the United States, insisted this

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<sup>94</sup>Quoted in Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 227.

<sup>95</sup>Rev. John F. O'Hara to Josephus Daniels, December 19, 1934; January 4, 1935, Box 777, Daniels Papers.

editor, not the Catholic Church, and his mistakes should be attributed "to ignorance rather than malice."<sup>96</sup>

A significant step toward enlightening public opinion was taken when William Franklin Sands, professor at Georgetown University, toured Mexico to investigate the supposed anticlericalism. Sands reported to the American press that Ambassador Daniels was being unjustly maligned. Daniels had, said the professor, gone out of his way to try to resolve the religious strife in Mexico.<sup>97</sup>

There is still more evidence that the Knights of Columbus did not represent all American Catholics in their approach to Mexican anticlericalism. Father John A. Ryan,

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<sup>96</sup>The New World, October 12, 1934, p. 4; January 18, 1935, p. 4. The Michigan Catholic attempted to explain the faux pas committed by Daniels by attributing it to his lack of Spanish which led him to misinterpret Calles' remarks as simply praising popular education (December 6, 1934, p. 1); Commonweal pointed out that the ambassador did have an excellent record of religious tolerance, and supported Al Smith in 1928, against the opposition of many of his North Carolina neighbors (February 15, 1935, p. 441); the Louisville paper, The Record, proclaimed: "we stand with President Roosevelt in his commitment . . . of the United States to non-interference in the affairs of Mexico" (clipping, November 21, 1935, Box 778, Daniels Papers); Central-Blatt and Social Justice Review insisted that the entire problem was inherited, not caused, by Roosevelt (XXVII, March, 1935, 389).

<sup>97</sup>Josephus Daniels to President Roosevelt, August 2, 1935, President's Secretary File I, Diplomatic Correspondence, Mexico, Box 2, Roosevelt Papers.



for example, rejected the overtures of Maurice A. Tobin to become involved in a campaign to pressure President Roosevelt into intervening in Mexico. Ryan felt that the Borah resolution would certainly fail because it was "an undue interference in Mexican affairs."<sup>98</sup> Then there was Joseph P. Tumulty, former secretary to the late President Wilson, who was barely persuaded by friends not to publicly answer the charges Father Coughlin was making against Ambassador Daniels.<sup>99</sup> Ralph Adams Cram audaciously suggested in the pages of Commonweal that American Catholics place faith in the good intentions of President Cardenas. During a personal visit to Mexico, Cram found Cardenas to be a reasonable man. Cram felt that the Mexican Church could only benefit under his rule.<sup>100</sup>

The most evident sign that Catholic opinion on the United States' role in Mexico was divided was the decision by the University of Notre Dame to present President Roosevelt with an honorary degree in the midst of his dispute with

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<sup>98</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan to Maurice A. Tobin, February 19, 1935, Ryan Papers.

<sup>99</sup>Joseph P. Tumulty to Josephus Daniels, January 5, 1935, Box 777, Daniels Papers.

<sup>100</sup>Ralph Adams Cram, "A Note on Mexico," Commonweal, May 22, 1936, pp. 91-92.

Martin Carmody. It is not clear who initiated the idea of presenting the degree to the President, but Frank C. Walker, a close advisor of Roosevelt and a graduate of Notre Dame, was deeply involved in the preliminaries for the ceremony. Reverend John F. O'Hara, president of the university, was elated over the idea and telegraphed to FDR on November 6, 1935, formally inviting him to receive an honorary Doctor of Laws and to speak at a special convocation honoring the Philippine Commonwealth, recently made independent. A week later, O'Hara traveled to Washington for a personal meeting with the President to iron out all the details. The priest even submitted to Marvin McIntyre a draft of his welcoming speech, asking for any suggestions on its contents. Quite clearly the university was anxious to have the President appear.<sup>101</sup>

Notre Dame officials were not the only ones elated at the news. Reverend Maurice S. Sheehy of Catholic University, a close friend of the administration, expressed delight to Marguerite LeHand that Notre Dame was granting the President a degree. Recalling that Catholic University had acted

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<sup>101</sup>Steve Early to Frank Waler, telegram, November 5, 1935; Rev. John F. O'Hara to President Roosevelt, November 6, 1935; November 18, 1935; Rev. John O'Hara to Marvin McIntyre, December 5, 1935, Reel 2, Sel. Mat.

similarly in 1933, Sheehy said: "When we gave him an honorary degree we made an act of faith in him. That faith has certainly been justified." Sheehy pictured Roosevelt as the man who had saved the country from economic collapse. In an obvious reference to the Mexican situation, the priest regretted the unfortunate "campaign" currently being waged against the President. He hoped that Miss LeHand could keep these attacks from the President's view and he urged her to ignore them herself.<sup>102</sup>

On December 9, 1935, before a large audience at South Bend, Notre Dame presented honorary degrees to President Roosevelt and to Senor Carlos P. Romulo, Philippine editor and educator. Presiding at the ceremony was George Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago. Mundelein, an enthusiastic supporter of Roosevelt, used his opening remarks to make his current position clear. The Cardinal explained his presence at Notre Dame as a guarantee that Roosevelt would be among friends. He praised the New Deal and FDR's "indominatable perserving courage." As for the current quarrel between the President and the Knights of Columbus, the Cardinal made it clear that neither he nor the Church were in politics and that no one

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<sup>102</sup>Rev. Maurice S. Sheehy to Marguerite LeHand, December 2, 1935, Reel 2, Sel. Mat.

had a right to speak for the political allegiance of American Catholics. Despite this disclaimer, the Cardinal was in politics whether he liked it or not. The fact that he publicly lavished praise on the President at the same time that the Knights, Bishop Curley, Coughlin, and others were sharply criticizing him was of political significance. Harold Ickes was not alone in interpreting the speech as "a pretty complete endorsement of the President." When informed by reporters on the scene that he had virtually given a nominating speech for the President, the Cardinal merely remarked: "I always go all the way for a friend."<sup>103</sup>

Roosevelt, who had hardly expected such an endorsement, was especially pleased with the Cardinal's remarks.<sup>104</sup> He prefaced his own speech with an emotional thanks to Mundelein for his praise. The President then went on to speak of the necessity in any "true national life" for the recognition of the "right of man." "Supreme among these rights," said FDR, "we . . . hold to be the rights of freedom of education and freedom of religious worship." This was a

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<sup>103</sup>Gannon, Spellman, p. 156; Ickes, Diary, I, 479-80; New York Times, December 10, 1935, pp. 12, 13; Commonweal, December 20, 1935, p. 216.

<sup>104</sup>Ickes, Diary, I, 479.

clear enough endorsement of religious freedom.<sup>105</sup>

Arthur Krock, political editor of the New York Times, interpreted the entire affair as a Catholic endorsement of President Roosevelt and a repudiation of the Carmody and Curley campaign. According to Krock, Roosevelt and the New Dealers were especially pleased by the endorsement of Cardinal Mundelein, who usually kept out of politics. His statement had added meaning because, according to Krock, "literally millions look for sociological appraisal as well as spiritual guidance" from the Cardinal. There were, thought Krock, three reasons for the Cardinal's statement. First, Mundelein wanted to publicly rebuke political clergymen like Coughlin who had been attacking the New Deal. Second, he wanted to reprimand laymen like Carmody who had criticized Roosevelt and usurped the prerogative of the bishops to speak for the Church. Finally, he wished "to endorse his conception of the President's efforts to spread the blessing of American prosperity." Krock saw real significance in the fact that a leader in a conservative force like the Church should endorse the New Deal at a time when other so-called conservatives were speaking of communist

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<sup>105</sup>Rosenman, Public Papers, IV, 493-96.

influence in government. He concluded: "the unscheduled, fervent praise of the Cardinal made the journey far more notable than any of the White House entourage expected when the trip was arranged."<sup>106</sup>

Other sources did not react as favorably to events at Notre Dame. For certain elements in the Church, it was distinctly embarrassing to have the President granted an honorary degree from the foremost Catholic university in the land and be praised by a leading churchman such as Mundelein. The editor of the Baltimore Catholic Review, Bishop Curley's organ, insisted that Catholics were expressing "deep regret" over the entire affair. Monsignor Albert Smith insisted that the honorary degree was only "in gratitude for the independence of the Philippine Islands, a Catholic country."<sup>107</sup> The Brooklyn Tablet insisted that Notre Dame would "be years regaining respect" due to its decision to honor Roosevelt. As for the President, he should not expect the Catholic voter to be deceived by his "walking on both sides of the street."<sup>108</sup> Finally, the Commonweal insisted that Catholic

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<sup>106</sup>New York Times, December 13, 1935, p. 24.

<sup>107</sup>Clipping of New York Herald Tribune, December 5, 1935, Reel 1, Sel. Mat.; New York Times, December 5, 1935, p. 29.

<sup>108</sup>November 23, 1935, p. 9; December 21, 1935, p. 11.

opinion of Roosevelt was not significantly "affected" by the Notre Dame affair. As a matter of record, the Catholic press did not play up the ceremony.<sup>109</sup>

It is difficult to determine what effect all these Catholic comments had on the internal workings of the Roosevelt administration. It is clear that the President was concerned over the pressure being exerted from various Catholic sources. When Ambassador Daniels first made his remark on the Mexican educational system, the storm of protest which broke loose was enough to cause Under Secretary of State Phillips to ask Daniels for an explanation. "In view of the political strength of all combined . . .," Phillips wanted to quote Daniels' explanation that he was only praising education in general and that he did not realize there was anything in the Calles speech dealing with religious matters.<sup>110</sup>

The President himself soon felt the pressure of Catholic protest. At his press conference of October 17, 1934, he was asked if Daniels was going to be recalled

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<sup>109</sup>December 27, 1935, p. 241.

<sup>110</sup>Memorandum of telephone conversation between Ambassador Daniels and Under Secretary Phillips, October 14, 1934, Box 777, Daniels Papers.

because of the recent criticism leveled at him by Catholic groups. Roosevelt displayed some irritation and pointed out that most of these charges sounded "fishy."<sup>111</sup>

When it was rumored that Roosevelt intended to visit Mexico in the summer of 1935, some Catholic sources became especially irritated. Daniels was so afraid of the political implications of the Catholic criticism being directed at him that he wanted to avoid having the President involved. Accordingly he suggested to the President that he put off his Mexican trip at this time. Roosevelt apparently agreed with Daniels' analysis, for he wrote, "from present indications . . . the Borah resolution has not served to quiet things down and my one great regret is that it may keep me from visiting you . . . this year." The trip was never made.<sup>112</sup>

Meanwhile, Ambassador Daniels did his best to clear up the controversy. He issued a statement through the State Department reaffirming his dedication to "the principles of our country with reference to public schools, the freedom of

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<sup>111</sup>Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 210.

<sup>112</sup>Josephus Daniels to President Roosevelt, February 1, 1935; Roosevelt to Daniels, February 9, 1935, President's Personal File, 86, Roosevelt Papers.



religion and the freedom of the press."<sup>113</sup> Privately he wrote to Roosevelt expressing bitterness over the criticism being leveled at him. He pointed out that he had supported Smith for the presidency in 1928 and had fought the bigots. His record as Secretary of the Navy was also evident of his "disregard of a man's church affiliation in public affairs." In view of this, Daniels said, "it seems strange that they could forget my lifetime devotion to freedom of religion and my freedom from discrimination against Catholics. . . ."<sup>114</sup>

In a letter to the Catholic Columbian Daniels presented a detailed defense of his behavior as Ambassador. Here he pointed out that he was a Christian, that he had no sympathy for atheism, and that he felt the American public school system was the best in the world. As for the incident which precipitated Catholic criticism, Daniels insisted that, as he understood it, Calles had "simply made a declaration for universal education." Admitting that he had not seen the entire text of Calles' speech, the Ambassador could not understand how anyone could interpret his comments as being against religion. This was he wrote, especially

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<sup>113</sup>Quoted in Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 210.

<sup>114</sup>Josephus Daniels to President Roosevelt, December 6, 1934, President's Personal File 86, Roosevelt Papers.

surprising, in view of his "lifelong devotior to the precepts of the Christian religion," and his "unbroken opposition to intolerance in any shape or form."<sup>115</sup>

Behind the scenes, Roosevelt did his best to ameliorate Catholic criticism. He was greatly assisted by Reverend John Burke, and to a lesser extent by Judge Martin T. Manton and Bishop Francis Spellman. When a particular bishop requested the President's opinion on the Mexican situation, Roosevelt generally discussed the reply with Burke, who also kept Roosevelt up to date on developments in Mexico's attitude toward the Church and served as a liaison man to the Vatican.<sup>116</sup> Burke personally favored a settlement which would involve only the Mexican Church and government. He often expressed embarrassment over the political antics of the Knights of Columbus.<sup>117</sup> At the same time, in hopes of reaching a settlement, Judge Manton sought to arrange a meeting between Bishop Spellman, another supporter of the

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<sup>115</sup>Josephus Daniels to Catholic Columbian, January 3, 1935, in clipping of January 25, 1935 issue, Reel 1, Sel. Mat.

<sup>116</sup>Confidential memorandum from Marvin McIntyre to President Roosevelt, May 27, 1935, Official File 146, Mexico 1933-40, Box 1, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>117</sup>Sumner Welles to President Roosevelt, June 25, 1935, President's Secretary File, Diplomatic Correspondence, Mexico, Box 2, Roosevelt Papers.

administration, and President Cardenas of Mexico. Roosevelt was advised of this move and agreed to arrange such a meeting, provided it was cleared with the Vatican. Spellman was personally willing to undertake the job, but the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, Archbishop Cicognani, preferred that all negotiations between the Church, Roosevelt, and Mexico be handled by Father Burke. All hopes of a meeting ended with this rebuttal. Judge Manton felt, according to Spellman, that the Church was "missing a good opportunity."<sup>118</sup>

Besides these maneuvers, Roosevelt himself publicly made statements favoring religious freedom on at least three different occasions in 1935. These included his reply to the Congressional petition of July 18, his speech at San Diego on October 2, and his remarks at Notre Dame.

As the election year of 1936 approached, it was only natural that the administration should hope that Catholic criticism would abate. Certain elements in the Church, however, were interested in keeping the issue alive. The Knights of Columbus refused to accept Roosevelt's letter of

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<sup>118</sup>Gannon, Spellman, cites diary, July 10, 1935, p. 118; Judge Martin T. Manton to President Roosevelt, July 11, 1935, Official File 28, Roosevelt Papers.

November 13 as the last word on the subject of Mexico.

Indeed, one Catholic priest called the letter "an affront to the sense of equity of the multitude of American Catholics."<sup>119</sup> Martin Carmody continued to take his case to the public over the radio and in public appearances. Over the Boston air waves he insisted that the Knights had never called for intervention in Mexico and that the President had brought this up to confuse the issue.<sup>120</sup> In Philadelphia Carmody spoke publicly against the administration. Here, however, he was confronted with a counterattack by Michael Francis Doyle who had a rebuttal published in the local newspaper. Roosevelt was so impressed with Doyle's defense that he sent it to Father Burke "with the thought that it might be extensively used."<sup>121</sup>

The Catholic press also did a good job of keeping the Mexican issue alive in 1936. Columbia naturally reported faithfully the speeches of Carmody. The editor of The Sign, national Catholic monthly, felt that the Mexican government

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<sup>119</sup>Rev. George J. Reid to Editor, Commonweal, January 3, 1936, p. 274.

<sup>120</sup>The Boston Pilot, February 29, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>121</sup>Michael F. Doyle to Marvin McIntyre, March 2, 1936; Roosevelt Memorandum, March 14, 1936, Reel 2, Sel. Mat.

was not acting as if President Roosevelt had given his blessing to its anticlericalism. These critical ideas were shared by Reverend Theophane Maguire, a contributor to The Sign, who warned that Roosevelt's "nice but innocuous" words did not confuse American Catholics about the extent of his sympathy.<sup>122</sup> As evidence of the United States' responsibility for the chaos in Mexico, America pointed to the fact that Daniels, who had demonstrated his incompetence, was still in office.<sup>123</sup> In another Catholic periodical, Light, Frederick V. Williams sought to answer the pro-Calles views presented by Cram in Commonweal. Williams felt that Cram had been influenced by the propaganda put out by Washington, which was aimed at saving the Catholic vote. But Williams was sure that Roosevelt and the Democratic party had "no doubt lost this election year by the refusal of the President to check our Ambassador . . . in his flagrant support of the Communist persecution of the Church."<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup>Columbia, May, 1936, p. 3; Clipping of The Sign, April, 1936, p. 523, Box 777, Daniels Papers.

<sup>123</sup>Clipping of America, February 29, 1936, p. 487, Box 777, Daniels Papers.

<sup>124</sup>F. V. Williams, "An Answer to Cram," Light, July, 1936, clipping in Box 777, Daniels Papers. This magazine was the official organ of the International Catholic Truth Society. Other evidence of continued disenchantment with

There were certain signs developing, however, to indicate that this belligerent attitude by the Knights of Columbus and others had in reality antagonized more people than it had converted. The Knights were accused of having political motives behind their campaign against Roosevelt. Frank Picard of Saginaw, Michigan, wrote to Martin Carmody to express disappointment over the campaign against the first President to have given Catholics "a fair deal." He further accused the Supreme Knights of attempting to split the northern Catholic vote in order to throw the 1936 election to the Republicans. "I do resent," said Picard, "this damned Republican propaganda under the guise of religion."<sup>125</sup> This same charge was made by Joseph Leib of South Bend, Indiana. To both men Carmody gave assurance that "there has been nothing political, partisan, or personal in the position of the Knights of Columbus." Furthermore, he would not permit such an issue to be made a political football.<sup>126</sup>

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the Roosevelt foreign policy appeared, meanwhile, in many diocesan papers. See also The Catholic World, CXLIII (August, 1936), 620-21; Commonweal, August 14, 1936, p. 388; The Boston Pilot, September 12, 1936, p. 1, and The Catholic Transcript, March 12, 1936, p. 4.

<sup>125</sup>Frank Picard to Martin Carmody, April 12, 1935, Official File, 28, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>126</sup>Joseph Leib to President Roosevelt, December 16, 1935, Official File 28, Roosevelt Papers; New York Times, December 13, 1935, p. 14.

Despite these comments by Carmody, many individuals still feared that the Mexican controversy was going to hurt Roosevelt with Catholic voters at the polls in 1936. Josephus Daniels, for one, was not worried about his own reputation among Catholics, but was chiefly concerned "lest some politicians might seek to arouse Church opposition to Roosevelt in the next presidential election."<sup>127</sup> Daniels, who expressed this opinion to President Roosevelt as early as August, 1935, was not alone in this estimation. Frank Tannenbaum, a noted Columbia University economist who was an authority on Latin America, also feared Catholic political reprisal. With these fears in mind, he had even attempted to convince Mexican officials to grant more religious freedom to Catholics. The professor reported to Ambassador Daniels that he had a verbal assurance from President Cardenas that Mexico would conduct its religious policy in such a way that it could not be used to hurt Roosevelt politically. Daniels himself suggested that Catholic opinion be soothed by "liberal dosages of patronage."<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup>Josephus Daniels, Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1947), p. 179.

<sup>128</sup>Josephus Daniels to President Roosevelt, August 26, 1935, President's Secretary File I, Diplomatic Corr., Mexico, Box 2, Roosevelt Papers.

At first, the Roosevelt administration was divided over how to combat the political problems raised by the Mexican affair. Jim Farley wanted Daniels to take an active part in the campaign, because he thought the Ambassador's influence would help the ticket in certain sections of the country. Secretary Hull and others, however, felt it would be best to keep Daniels out of the campaign and attempt to ignore the entire issue.<sup>129</sup>

While division of Catholic opinion no doubt had some effect on Roosevelt's method of handling this politically sensitive issue, it does not entirely explain his actions. Roosevelt was primarily interested in domestic issues in 1935 and 1936 and wanted to avoid any foreign squabbles.<sup>130</sup> But the President also was firmly convinced that any action similar to that requested by the Knights of Columbus could only hurt both the Catholic Church and United States-Mexican relations. Consummate politician that he was, Roosevelt

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<sup>129</sup>Cronon, Josephus Daniels in Mexico, p. 109.

<sup>130</sup>Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 219, advances this view, but it could be argued that the difficulties Roosevelt was having with domestic issues would make him more prone to placate Catholic criticism at home. He would sacrifice a foreign policy, one not considered of prime importance at the time, to insure Catholic support for his New Deal legislation.



correctly calculated that American Catholic opposition was divided and, therefore, unlikely to be of significance in the 1936 election. Indeed, his public statements and private actions, although undoubtedly quite sincere, were phrased in such a way as to retain the sympathy of many Catholics.<sup>131</sup> Of course, the overwhelming victory of 1936 clearly indicates that no large minority group, Catholic or otherwise, deserted Roosevelt at the polls.

Roosevelt's political acumen and actions, however, were only one reason why the Mexican issue was not significant in November, 1936. The height of Mexican anticlericalism came in 1935. By 1936, some improvements in Mexican Church-State relations had been made. One student of the period believes that "had the elections taken place some eighteen months earlier . . . Roosevelt would have lost some votes."<sup>132</sup> As it was, the divided opinion of American Catholics gave the administration tactical room to maneuver, and the solid cooperation of such men as Burke, Mundelein, Callahan, and Doyle was a valuable asset.

If the Mexican episode did not have political

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<sup>131</sup>Cronon, "Mexican Anticlericalism," p. 219.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

repercussions in 1936, it was still important for a number of reasons. The entire affair demonstrated the difficulties the Church experienced when it attempted to exert political leverage. It is true that Roosevelt was sympathetic to the Church and gave Catholics extensive recognition, but this did not mean that he could be pressured into actions that he considered contrary to the best interest of the country. Finally, the Mexican affair demonstrated a number of things about the American Catholic Church. Obviously this was no monolithic institution which could demand unity of thought and action by its members concerning a largely secular topic. Furthermore, when voting time arrived in 1936, Catholics reacted in much the same way as their fellow citizens; they agreed that foreign affairs were not the most pressing problem facing America.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE CAMPAIGN OF 1936

If Mexican anticlericalism was not to be a significant issue in the campaign of 1936, there were still many other topics which made both Roosevelt and the Catholic Church especially conscious of each other's existence and power. While Ambassador Daniels persisted in emphasizing that Mexico might still be an issue, Jim Farley was warning the President that the charge of communism in the administration was beginning to evoke sympathetic audiences, especially among Catholics. Father Charles Coughlin, an old supporter of the New Deal, had by this time become totally disenchanted and was sponsoring a third-party movement behind the political figurehead of William Lemke. Al Smith and the American Liberty League were pushing hard the theme of constitutional government, a phenomenon that they insisted had disappeared under FDR. On the bright side, however, the President could count on the support of such prominent prelates as Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago, Father John Ryan of Washington, and a

number of influential Catholic laymen. The election results of 1936 showed clearly that fears of American Catholics defecting from the Democratic party were unfounded.

The administration, however, had no way of foreseeing this in early 1936. Furthermore, there were numerous signs on the horizon which pointed to disenchantment of Catholics with the New Deal. Already some of them had tried to capitalize on dissatisfaction over the Mexican anticlericalism. Now, from Mexico, Ambassador Daniels wrote to the President that he should make sure that "there is a Catholic in your cabinet." Without one the administration would leave itself wide open for charges of religious discrimination. In addition, Daniels remarked that he was advised that Bishop Kelley of Oklahoma was actively campaigning for Landon and would be "an advisor" for him. "If the Republican Catholics are going to be active for Landon," said Daniels, "I am sure you will do as you have been doing to show such recognition as their long devotion to the party deserves to able Democrats of that faith."<sup>1</sup> Specifically,

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<sup>1</sup>Josephus Daniels to President Roosevelt, June 22, 1936, President's Personal File, 86, Roosevelt Papers. P. H. Callahan wrote Daniels frequently during 1936 expressing fear that Mexico would be used to win Catholics away from FDR.

Daniels felt that Michael Francis Doyle deserved recognition for the splendid work he was doing in combating the criticism of the Knights of Columbus regarding the Mexican question. The Ambassador enthusiastically endorsed Doyle for the position of Assistant Secretary of the Navy.<sup>2</sup>

Daniels was not the only one to be concerned with the allegiance of American Catholics to the Democratic party during 1936. His concern was now reinforced by Mary W. Dewson, Democratic National Committeewoman. Miss Dewson had received letters from other politically active women which indicated that Ambassador Daniels' indifference toward Mexico's anticlericalism was hurting the party's image among Catholics. She expressed the wish to Eleanor Roosevelt that the President might make Daniels "Secretary of War, or something."<sup>3</sup>

Roosevelt himself had occasion to be reminded of the sensitivity of the Catholic vote when he received warning from Reverend H. J. Watterson of Westfield, New Jersey, that the administration's attitude toward Mexico was going to cost

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<sup>2</sup>Josephus Daniels to President Roosevelt, March 30, 1936, Official File 237, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>3</sup>Miss Mary W. Dewson to Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, October 19, 1936, Official File 237, Roosevelt Papers.

the party votes in November. The President replied by expressing appreciation for the priest's frank expression and personally regretting that it was not within his power to solve this question.<sup>4</sup>

There were a number of other issues raised during the course of the 1936 campaign which provoked strong interest among American Catholics. One of the most important was the defection from the Democratic party of Alfred E. Smith. The ex-Governor had been moving away from the Roosevelt administration ever since the very beginnings of the New Deal. His discontent rested on the argument that it was necessary to fight for the preservation of states-rights against the ever-growing power of the central government. Smith's criticism reached its apogee on January 25, 1936, when he addressed a star-studded meeting of the American Liberty League at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. In a speech that was praised by Pierre S. duPont and other leaders of American capitalism, Smith attacked the New Deal and Roosevelt as being communist-oriented.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Rev. H. J. Watterson to President Roosevelt, July 5, 1936, Official File 146-A, Mexico miscellaneous, Box 4, Roosevelt Papers.

<sup>5</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Politics of Upheaval (Boston, 1960), p. 519.

Joseph T. Robinson, who ran on Smith's ticket for vice-president in 1928, was designated as the administration's spokesman to reply to Smith. The main theme of Robinson's rebuttal was the fact that Smith had deserted the cause of progressivism, for which he had fought in New York state, to take the side of the barons of wealth. Roosevelt himself never once publicly attacked Smith and even tried to regain his friendship after the Liberty League speech.<sup>6</sup>

The actual political effect of Smith's defection and his subsequent support of Governor Landon is difficult to assess. Rexford Tugwell has stated that Smith probably did not hurt Roosevelt among Catholic voters in 1936.<sup>7</sup> Smith's biographer, Oscar Handlin, is careful to point out that Smith chose to leave the New Deal at a time when the National Catholic Welfare Conference was praising Roosevelt's efforts, and that few people followed him.<sup>8</sup> There are other indications that most Catholics were embarrassed by the New Yorker's rebellion from the party. It is true that C. W. Thompson, political analyst for Commonweal, hailed the

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 519, 520.

<sup>7</sup>Tugwell, Democratic Roosevelt, pp. 172-73.

<sup>8</sup>Handlin, Al Smith, p. 181.

Liberty League speech by Smith as being significant because it started a movement away from Roosevelt among prominent Southern and New England Democrats.<sup>9</sup> Yet Thompson's analysis was not shared by others. In Chicago, a meeting of the Catholic Conference on Social Problems was the occasion for strong criticism of Al Smith's speech.

Of more significance, because of its greater depth, was the criticism of Smith made by Reverend Ignatius W. Cox, who gave a radio address called "The American Liberty League and Our Immoral Economic Order" on February 7, 1936, in New York City. Basing his remarks on the Papal encyclicals, Cox asked the rhetorical question: "In reacting so strongly against the danger of collectivism, has the American Liberty League fallen into the lap of the opposite danger, branded by Pius XI as Individualism?" The League, said Cox, seemed to be primarily interested in the welfare of the individual, while Catholic social thought placed emphasis on the common welfare. The emphasis on rugged individualism, espoused by the League and by Smith, was an aspect of modern thought which "no Catholic who knows Catholic social doctrine can approve." As for Governor Smith, he had grossly over-

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<sup>9</sup>C. W. Thompson, "As the Primaries Begin," Commonweal, March 6, 1936, p. 509.



simplified the issue by saying that the present struggle was between communism and constitutional government. To Cox, plutocracy was just as dangerous as communism. He pointed out that "not all regimentation is communistic," and that too long had economic forces been unregulated in the United States. The priest chided Smith for pointing to communism as the main danger facing America. In fact communism was only a symptom of the economic liberalism favored by the Liberty League. This latter force was the real danger to America, and he suggested that Smith direct his efforts against it rather than sponsor it.<sup>10</sup> These remarks by Father Cox were widely publicized as evidence that neither Smith nor the American Liberty League spoke for the Church on social issues.<sup>11</sup>

Reverend Maurice S. Sheehy of Catholic University also took exception to the speech by ex-Governor Smith. Writing to Miss Margaret LeHand, Sheehy said that he had "given considerable thought to the possible effect of

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<sup>10</sup>Rev. Ignatius W. Cox, "The American Liberty League and Our Immoral Economic Order," The Catholic Mind, XXIV (March 8, 1936), 113-21; "Constitutional Liberty and Our Immoral Economic Order," The Catholic Mind, XXXIV (March 8, 1936), 105-13.

<sup>11</sup>New York Times, February 8, 1936, p. 2; Commonweal, March 20, 1936, p. 577.

Governor Smith's speech on the Catholic following of President Roosevelt." The President might not consider it of any significance, remarked the priest, but it "has been a major heartache to those who expected nobler things of Governor Smith." After all, Smith was not only condemning the President in his speech; he was indirectly criticizing "the leaders of his Church, including Cardinal Hayes." This followed because Hayes and others had forthrightedly endorsed the aims of the New Deal on many occasions. It was this same philosophy of the common good which Smith now labeled "socialism." Clearly, said Sheehy, "Governor Smith perhaps forgets that the greatest foe of Communism was the Catholic Church, and the most earnest champions of President Roosevelt's social policies have been the Catholic bishops." As to the political implications of Smith's defection, Sheehy was sure, on the basis of his talks with three bishops, that Catholics were more than ever behind the President.<sup>12</sup> Others felt the same way. In the East, Ed Flynn, Senator Robert Wagner, and other New York politicians reported that Smith's decision would have little impact on the voters.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Rev. Maurice S. Sheehy to Miss Margaret LeHand, January 30, 1936, Reel 2, Sel. Mat.

<sup>13</sup>Ickes, Diary, I, 687, 698-99.

Still, as the campaign progressed, it became clear that the major charges made by Smith--the disappearance of constitutional government and communist influence in the administration--struck a sympathetic chord with some Catholic leaders. Certain elements in the Church were beginning to express dissatisfaction with the course of the New Deal. F. P. Kenkel, editor of the Central-Blatt and Social Justice Review, directed his attack more at Roosevelt's advisors than at the President himself. Kenkel felt the Brain Trust was attempting to foster a planned economy on the people, "despite the Constitution." Applauding the decisions of the Supreme Court on NRA and AAA, this editor felt that the New Deal was doomed to failure from the start "because its provisions were incompatible, not alone with the organic law of the land, . . . but with the traditions and the very spirit of the American people." Some relief was given to the people, but it was incorporated in a scheme of economic nationalism and state-socialism. The main culprits in this scheme were not the elected officials but rather people like Hugh Johnson and James Warburg, who, Kenkel felt, aimed at the destruction of the middle class in America. As for the assertion that their ideas resembled the Papal encyclicals, Kenkel insisted that this was a mere "enchanting fancy,

which the men chiefly responsible for Mr. Roosevelt's planned economy . . . were at no pains to destroy." The Pope's plan envisioned no such large exercise of state power, but rather would have the state "discharge its obligations . . . through the professional organizations, accepting all the tasks they are able to fulfill."<sup>14</sup>

A number of other Catholic editors were also breaking away from the Roosevelt consensus. Patrick Scanlan of The Brooklyn Tablet, one of the President's strongest Mexican critics, wrote that Roosevelt's popularity was slipping. He attributed this decline to such things as continued high unemployment, prolific government spending, and poorly designed laws. The planned economy was an obvious fraud, so why not admit it, felt Scanlan, instead of preaching class hatred and insinuating that it was a crime to make more money than one's neighbor.<sup>15</sup> In New England, The Boston Pilot was crying out against what it considered another attempt by the government to over-regulate the private lives of its citizens, an idea which had recently proved futile in

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<sup>14</sup>F. P. Kenkel, "New Deals," Central-Blatt and Social Justice Review, XXVIII (March, 1936), 381-83; (July-August, 1936), 115-18..

<sup>15</sup>The Brooklyn Tablet, April 6, 1935, p. 9; July 4, 1936, p. 9.

prohibition. The editor insisted that the same tendency was present in the "twenty thousand regulations . . . enacted since 1933." This constant growth of bureaucratic government should be checked for it tended toward one-man rule. Indeed, remarked the editor, "it is possible that the country is somewhat nearer dictatorship than the average citizen realizes."<sup>16</sup> Reverend James Gillis, editor of The Catholic World, lamented the defection of Al Smith from the Roosevelt cause but could sympathize with him. Excessive government spending, continued unemployment, and the disrespect for the Constitution which seemed to be characteristics of the New Deal were causing Gillis himself to have second thoughts about the President.<sup>17</sup> Even Commonweal, a pro-Roosevelt publication, was concerned enough to question the President's "strength as a candidate for re-election." The editor remarked that "the essential dissatisfaction was . . . less with 'planned government' as such than with the evidence to show that the planning hadn't actually been planned."<sup>18</sup> Reverend Edward Lodge Curran, president of the International

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<sup>16</sup>The Boston Pilot, February 1, 1936, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup>The Catholic World, CXLIII (April, 1936), 1-9.

<sup>18</sup>Commonweal, April 17, 1936, p. 674.

Catholic Truth Society, was so disturbed about the course of New Deal legislation in 1936 that he suggested that Catholics ought to band together as a group to fight to preserve the Constitution.<sup>19</sup>

The most dangerous indication of Catholic dissatisfaction, however, was seen in the political activities of Father Charles Coughlin, the radio priest from Detroit. Coughlin was especially effective among people who feared communist influence in government, because red infiltration of the New Deal was one of his favorite themes. Before 1936, Coughlin was not significant in the story of Catholic relations with the New Deal. He represented primarily a personal movement which, while perhaps revealing certain aspects of Catholic thought, was not entirely within the mainstream of the Catholic Church.<sup>20</sup> Yet in 1935 and 1936 he entered the political scene in such direct fashion that he prompted many members of the Catholic Church to take a more direct role in the presidential election.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., October 30, 1936, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup>Charles J. Tull, "Father Coughlin, The New Deal, and The Election of 1936" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1962), p. 217, writes that it is perfectly clear that the radio priest did not represent a concerted political effort on the part of the Catholic Church in America.

A history of Father Coughlin's relations with the New Deal is not at issue here. It is clear that in the early stages of the Roosevelt administration, he was an enthusiastic backer of the President, and that his support was welcomed. The break in this relationship seems to have developed partially over the fight to have the United States join the World Court in January, 1935. Roosevelt favored this move, but Coughlin is attributed with helping to defeat it in Congress. One should not, however, place too much emphasis on any one event, but rather consider the growing estrangement as inevitable in view of the strong personalities involved.<sup>21</sup>

It might be well here to sketch the course of this estrangement. As early as February, 1935, Coughlin was charging that the administration had communist tendencies. In the same speech, however, he paradoxically insisted that Roosevelt was also a tool of capitalism.<sup>22</sup> On November 17, 1935, the priest seemed to take an irrevocable step when he

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<sup>21</sup>Dyson, "The Quest for Power," p. 29, points to two factors leading to the break: Coughlin favored inflation to cure the depression while FDR had already tried this and found it wanting; Coughlin wanted to be an intimate advisor and public spokesman for the New Deal, but FDR was not interested.

<sup>22</sup>Tull, "Father Coughlin," p. 107.

publicly announced that the principles of his movement for social justice and the aims of the Roosevelt administration were "unalterably opposed." As long as the President entertained both communistic schemes and the support of the plutocrats (an unwitting compliment to Roosevelt's political dexterity), he would be unable to effectively bring relief to the American people. Later, on June 5, 1936, Coughlin retreated some by asserting that the President was probably not personally conscious of the communistic tendencies within some of his new schemes, but was "being driven by sinister influences he does not fully comprehend."<sup>23</sup> This was only a momentary lapse, however, and as the campaign got under way, Coughlin, who was leading the support for William Lemke and his Union Party, became even more vitriolic. In New Bedford, Massachusetts, the priest reached a high point of inanity when he publicly declared: "As I was instrumental in removing Herbert Hoover from the White House, so help me God, I will be instrumental in taking a Communist out of the chair once occupied by Washington."<sup>24</sup> Later in the campaign, Coughlin was guilty of such indiscretions as calling the

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<sup>23</sup>Tull, "Father Coughlin," pp. 140, 167.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 187.



President a liar and a "scab."

The main significance of this performance is not the neurosis which gripped this particular priest, but rather the reaction his performance prompted from both the Catholic Church and from the administration. This reaction resulted not so much from concern with Coughlin the individual as with concern over his role as a Catholic priest and the impact he was having upon the Catholic image in the United States. It is from this point of view that Coughlin should be viewed here, without reference to the merits or demerits of his philosophy and personality. He was an irritant, and as such both the Church and the administration had to come to grips with him.

The outbursts of Smith and Coughlin were not isolated phenomena. Both men had an effect on the Catholic populace of the nation. Perhaps not all priests were so influenced by Coughlin as was Reverend James A. Smith, pastor of a Catholic Church in Long Island, who urged his congregation not to vote for Roosevelt because of his "red" affiliations, but there is evidence of growing concern among Catholics with this charge.<sup>25</sup> In 1936 it appeared that the Church was

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<sup>25</sup>New York Times, November 2, 1936, p. 2; Dyson, "The Quest for Power," p. 57, says that the priest's concentration on communism was especially attractive to Catholic voters.

in the midst of a crusade against communism. Lay organizations such as the Catholic Daughters of America, Notre Dame Alumni, and the Holy Name Society were all active in this denunciation of the "Red Menace."<sup>26</sup>

So popular was the charge that even Roosevelt was becoming concerned with its effect on his public image. On September 29, 1936, in Syracuse, New York, he publicly disassociated himself from the Marxist movement. He said:

Here and now, once and for all, let us bury that red herring and destroy that false issue. . . . I have not sought, I do not seek, I repudiate the support of any advocate of Communism or of any other alien "ism" which would by fair means or foul change our American democracy. That is my position. It has always been my position. It always will be my position.<sup>27</sup>

There was a prelude to this strong statement by the President which is worth mentioning here. Sumner Welles had reported to Roosevelt the substance of a conversation he had with Charles Taussig of New York. Taussig had called Welles to report that he and Adolph Berle had dined with Bishop Molloy of Brooklyn and "certain other prominent Catholics." The clerics had expressed sincere concern about the communism

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<sup>26</sup>Darrow, "Catholic Political Power," p. 60.

<sup>27</sup>Quoted in Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., The Politics of Upheaval, p. 620.

charges being labeled against the administration. Both Taussig and Berle were now "deeply disturbed and worried" by the effect that Coughlin, with his wild accusations about Roosevelt's leftist proclivities, was producing among Roman Catholics. Welles suggested to Roosevelt that Berle might write a speech dealing with this question for delivery by the President on Columbus Day. Apparently the administration was well aware of this situation because Secretary Hull replied to Welles that the President had decided to deal with this charge of communism in his address to the Democratic State convention of New York at Syracuse on September 29.<sup>28</sup>

The speech that Roosevelt gave on September 29 should have satisfactorily ended the matter. Unfortunately, this was not to be the case. Despite Roosevelt's forthrightness, Father Gillis of The Catholic World complained that the speech lacked precision in its condemnation of communism. Gillis attributed this lack of precision to "a want of complete intellectual honesty." The priest also pinpointed the issues of the campaign as "the decline of democracy, the increase in centralization of governmental powers, and the

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<sup>28</sup>Sumner Welles to President Roosevelt, September 25, 1936, President's Personal File 182, Roosevelt Papers.

possible emergence of the absolute state."<sup>29</sup> Jim Farley was still so concerned over the effect of the communist charges that he asked Roosevelt to consider "calling Cardinal Mundelein in Chicago and asking if he would be willing to make a statement." While Farley did not expect the Cardinal to come out publicly for Roosevelt, he did feel that Mundelein would announce that there were no communists connected with the administration. Roosevelt, however, demurred on this suggestion, although he remained well aware of the importance of Cardinal Mundelein's support.<sup>30</sup>

Still, the administration had to evolve skillful tactics to deal with Coughlin and his charge of communism. Because of his unique status as a Roman Catholic priest in politics and because of his fanatical appeal, Coughlin presented special problems.<sup>31</sup> Roosevelt himself was certainly

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<sup>29</sup>The Catholic World, CXLIV (November, 1936), 129, 132.

<sup>30</sup>Farley to Roosevelt, October 23, 1936, President's Personal File 321, Roosevelt Papers. Roosevelt felt that Walter Cummings was a better man for the job suggested by Farley.

<sup>31</sup>Scholars have pointed out another reason why Roosevelt took notice of Father Coughlin's political activity: the possibility that he might be able to "bridge the gulf between the rural fundamentalist Protestants and the urban Irish Catholics." James Shenton, "The Coughlin Movement," p. 54 and Peter Morris, "Father Coughlin," p. 22 fn., accept this, but Morris substitutes "old Populist agrarians" for "rural fundamentalist."

aware of the difficulties Coughlin could cause. During the debate on the Bonus bill in January, 1936, a measure which Coughlin vigorously supported and which Congress passed over Roosevelt's veto, the two men came into direct conflict. Roosevelt was reported to have been so upset over the priest's antics that he threatened to release incriminating material on Coughlin's financial dealings. The President also played around with the idea of conferring with Cardinals Hayes, O'Connell, and Mundelein "to show them the attacks a priest had made on the President and ask them how this jibed with their theory that the Catholic Church should have an ambassador in each country."<sup>32</sup>

Roosevelt's political acumen, however, was too sharp to allow him to carry out this threat. He continued a policy of active silence which had earlier caused him to send Frank Murphy, just returned from his post as Governor of the Philippines to run for Governor of Michigan, to see Coughlin, an old friend of the Irishman. Murphy's mission was to try to dissuade Coughlin from engaging in political debate during 1936. Several long talks between Murphy and the priest followed. The former even went on the radio to try to

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<sup>32</sup>Blum, From the Morgenthau Diaries, p. 255.

counteract some of Coughlin's charges against the President. All of this had little effect, however, as Coughlin continued his barrage. The extent to which Murphy and Coughlin fell out over Roosevelt is indicated by the fact that the priest eventually supported the Republican candidate for Governor of Michigan against Murphy.<sup>33</sup>

The official strategy of the administration throughout 1936, however, was to avoid public condemnation of the priest. When this rule was broken by Secretary Ickes, who gave a speech criticizing Coughlin, Roosevelt expressed displeasure over it at a cabinet meeting.<sup>34</sup> The President preferred to ignore the priest publicly but to exploit the sympathy among Catholics which his attacks produced. Ickes and Farley informally sounded out such political figures as Senator Robert Wagner and Ed Flynn on the effect of Coughlin and Smith's attacks among Catholics.<sup>35</sup> The President was well-advised not to publicly attack Coughlin, but to let him continue on his way until he had irritated his fellow

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<sup>33</sup>Lunt, "Frank Murphy," p. 137; Tull, "Father Coughlin," p. 124.

<sup>34</sup>Dyson, "The Quest for Power," p. 70.

<sup>35</sup>Tull, "Father Coughlin," p. 222; Ickes, Diary, I, 686.

Catholics with his tactics. This is precisely what happened in Catholic circles which controlled most of the Church's public expression. Although there was never any official condemnation of Coughlin by a joint meeting of the American bishops, as we shall see, most bishops, priests, and laymen grew more and more disillusioned as his tactics increased in vehemence.

While it is difficult to abstract the motives which caused the Church to be critical of Coughlin, certain tendencies are evident. One central fact is that many of the clergy were avid supporters of Franklin Roosevelt. They recognized the President's contributions in attacking the depression and appreciated his liberal approach toward the Church. To hear Coughlin call the President a liar and a communist was enough to cause this element intense embarrassment. Secondly, a number of Catholics expressed dismay that Coughlin's efforts were destroying the good relations which the Church had developed with the Roosevelt administration. This was the argument advanced by Reverend Maurice Sheehy of Catholic University.

In confronting the Coughlin movement the Church faced a dilemma. It was clear that the priest's attacks were alienating many non-Catholics and that many were looking upon

him as the official spokesman of the Church. Doctor Walter Maier, professor at the Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary of St. Louis, expressed a popular idea when he publicly stated that Coughlin had not been repudiated by his Church, but rather that he "talks personally with Rome by radio phone," and "if ever Coughlinism should triumph . . . his church would capitalize the triumph, for the voice behind that radio priest is the voice of his church." This was announced to a crowd of 4,500 at an annual Lutheran Day ceremony.<sup>36</sup>

Maier's outburst was supplemented by a more rational approach from the editor of the New Republic, who, in an article on the political significance of the Coughlin movement, judged it to mean the entrance of the Catholic Church into American politics. This evaluation he defended by claiming, first, that Coughlin was the best man to organize Christian socialism in this country. Second, the International influence of the Vatican was slipping in Europe, which made the conquest of the United States imperative. Third, Coughlin's attacks on Roosevelt had attracted Catholics, many of whom, on religious grounds, opposed the

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<sup>36</sup>New York Times, August 2, 1936, p. 12.



President because of his son's divorce, Eleanor's support of birth control, and the condoning of anticlericalism in Mexico by Josephus Daniels.<sup>37</sup>

It seemed that a growing number of Americans were beginning to equate Coughlin's remarks with the official position of the Catholic Church. Yet the Church could not officially silence the radio priest. A number of difficulties stood in the way of such an action. As long as Coughlin had the support of his bishop, Michael Gallagher of Detroit, he could not be touched short of Papal intervention. Secondly, many priests were conscious of the fact that Coughlin had such a hold on his followers that many of them would desert the Church if he should be attacked. Finally, there was also the problem of publicity which would arise if the Church did silence Coughlin. Liberals would take this as proof of the Church's basic antipathy toward civil rights as expressed in the Constitution.<sup>38</sup> Altogether, the Coughlin movement presented a rather delicate situation to the Church.

Despite the lack of an official position, there is

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<sup>37</sup>Tull, "Father Coughlin," pp. 178-79.

<sup>38</sup>Dyson, "The Quest for Power," pp. 71, 80, 81.

abundant evidence of the Church's displeasure with Coughlin's political activities and with his attacks on the Roosevelt administration. This displeasure was expressed by a process of disassociation of elements of the Church from the Coughlin movement, by public deploring of the priest's tactics, and by public and private support for the President.

Expressions by Catholic hierarchy seemed to indicate that a large number of disenchanted bishops privately deplored Coughlin's activities. Among the three Cardinals in America there was unanimity regarding the radio priest. Cardinal O'Connell of Boston, an old foe of Coughlin, spoke of "hysterical voices among the clergy" which were out of keeping with the priestly vocation.<sup>39</sup> Cardinal Hayes also privately resented Coughlin's attacks on Roosevelt. Most significant, however, was the role played by Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago. Mundelein was an old supporter of the President and was eager to help erase the impression that the Catholic Church was speaking through the voice of Father Coughlin.<sup>40</sup> Publicly, Mundelein stated that Father Coughlin

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<sup>39</sup>Quoted by Tull, "Father Coughlin," p. 132.

<sup>40</sup>Later the President was to write Josephus Daniels that Mundelein had been "perfectly magnificent all through the campaign." See President Roosevelt to Josephus Daniels, November 9, 1936, President's Secretary File, Diplomatic

had a right to his own political view, by virtue of his American citizenship, "but he is not authorized to speak for the Catholic Church, nor does he represent the doctrine or sentiments of the Church."<sup>41</sup> In September, 1936, Mundelein publicly expressed his support for the Roosevelt administration and praised the prosperity which it had returned to the United States.<sup>42</sup>

These public remarks and private actions were not without their effect. Arthur Krock of the New York Times commented on the great reception given Roosevelt in Chicago during the campaign. Searching for reasons for this support, Krock pointed to "the sympathetic attitude toward him [FDR] of the eminent Catholic hierarchy in this city and State, chief of whom is Cardinal Mundelein." According to Krock, Mundelein felt that FDR's re-election was "necessary

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Corr., Mexico, Box 2, Roosevelt Papers. In this same letter FDR suggested to Daniels that he look into the feasibility of opening a Catholic seminary in Mexico City to train natives for the priesthood. Mundelein had suggested such a seminary for Texas, but FDR felt it should be located in Mexico itself and suggested to Daniels that "the germ of the idea might be planted with good effect." These remarks are cited only to illustrate the close relationship which existed between Mundelein and FDR.

<sup>41</sup>Quoted in Shannon, American Irish, p. 317.

<sup>42</sup>Clipping of Chicago Daily Times, September 15, 1936, in Reel 1, Sel. Mat.

definitely to rout the forces of social radicalism."<sup>43</sup>

Edward J. Kelly, Mayor of Chicago, placed great emphasis upon the Cardinal's support when analyzing FDR's political fortunes in Illinois. After the Cardinal had publicly praised the New Deal, Kelly wrote to the President and stressed the fact that Mundelein was held in high esteem by millions of Catholics and non-Catholics in the area. "Even the slightest comment," said the mayor, "either direct or indirect, is accepted as a standard by his followers and admirers." Mundelein's words of praise would "therefore be highly productive in [FDR's] favor at the proper time."<sup>44</sup>

Other elements of the hierarchy were also sympathetic with the Roosevelt cause. Of significance in measuring this sympathy are the remarks of Reverend Maurice Sheehy. As early as July 18, 1936, Sheehy was writing to the administration on the political implications of the Coughlin movement. At this time Sheehy described a meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria of four bishops, three monsignori, and himself. They discussed Coughlin's personal attacks on FDR. "We decided," said Sheehy, "how this action might be handled most

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<sup>43</sup>New York Times, October 20, 1936, p. 24.

<sup>44</sup>Edward J. Kelly to Roosevelt, September 16, 1936, Reel 1, Sel. Mat.

effectively. We have taken action." Sheehy insisted that his group wanted nothing to do with the political, but simply wanted "to tell the President his friends are not ignoring the calumnies of Father Coughlin."<sup>45</sup>

What actions were contemplated at the Waldorf-Astoria meeting is difficult to discern. Two of the bishops there, Thomas O'Reilly of Scranton, Pennsylvania, and James H. Ryan of Omaha, Nebraska, began a campaign along with Sheehy to seek statements by American bishops defending President Roosevelt against Coughlin's charges that he was a communist. In September, 1936, Sheehy again wrote to Steve Early that he could expect a number of letters from American bishops "affirming their faith in [FDR] despite the communist charges of Coughlin. Sheehy admitted that the charges did not deserve a reply but added that "in as much as the Catholic Church is the great foe of communism, these letters will be worthwhile."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Quoted in Tull, "Father Coughlin," p. 216. When asked about this meeting, Father Sheehy could not recall any specifics but indicated that "some of the bishops individually wrote the President saying that Father Coughlin did not represent the Catholic Church." Sheehy, letter to author, June 21, 1965.

<sup>46</sup>Rev. Maurice S. Sheehy to Steve Early, September 29, 1936, Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

Roosevelt had already received such a telegram from Bishop Bernard J. Mahoney of Sioux Falls, South Dakota in July, 1936. Mahoney spoke "in the name of the priests and people of the diocese," and protested "against references to you [FDR] by clerical vulgarian."<sup>47</sup> In September, Mahoney telegraphed to Sheehy asking him to inform the President that he considered Coughlin's charges of communism in the administration "most unjust."<sup>48</sup> Bishop James H. Ryan of Omaha, Nebraska, also wrote to the President in the same vein. Ryan spoke of his astonishment at the statements linking FDR with communism. He called these charges "unfair, unjust and untrue." "To affirm," said Ryan, "that the President of the U.S. is linked with communism is to speak irresponsibly and without knowledge of your true opinions."<sup>49</sup> Ryan's telegram was supplemented by an editorial he wrote for The True Voice, the official organ of his diocese. In this article of October 2, 1936, Ryan condemned certain

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<sup>47</sup>Quoted by Tull, "Father Coughlin," p. 215.

<sup>48</sup>Bishop Bernard J. Mahoney to Rev. Maurice S. Sheehy, telegram, September 26, 1936, Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

<sup>49</sup>Most Rev. James H. Ryan to President Roosevelt, September 25, 1936, Reel 3, Sel. Mat. This letter was forwarded to Senator Joseph C. O'Mahoney by Early with a note that "none of the other letters from the Bishops has been received as yet, but copies will be sent to you as they come in."

parties who had forgotten ethical principles in their political attacks on the President. "There is not one shred of evidence," read the editorial, "direct or indirect, to connect the name of President Roosevelt, with Communism, its principles, and its propaganda." Ryan concluded that FDR was always an enemy of communism.<sup>50</sup>

Other members of the hierarchy also expressed disapproval of Coughlin's attack on FDR. In Cincinnati, Archbishop John T. McNicholas reacted violently to Coughlin's assertion that Roosevelt was "anti-God." While he made clear that he was not making a political speech for or against the Democratic party and its candidate, the Archbishop did insist that Coughlin "transcends bounds" of decent morality by making such an accusation against the President. "There can be no objections to expressing condemnation of the acts of the administration in destroying crops and food," said the Archbishop, but this did not justify Coughlin's conclusion that Roosevelt was "anti-God,"

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<sup>50</sup>Clipping of The True Voice, October 2, 1936, Reel 3, Sel. Mat. Roosevelt, in reply to Ryan's telegram, expressed deep appreciation for having "so valiant a vindicator as yourself." FDR to Bishop Ryan, October 6, 1936, Reel 3, Sel. Mat. It should be noted, however, that there is no evidence that any more letters from American bishops were forthcoming to the administration.

or that bullets should be used if the election did not turn out the way he wanted. "The mere suggestion," said McNicholas, "of advocating a revolution even in the heat of oratory is most dangerous. Father Coughlin gives the impression that he appeals to force. In doing so he is morally in error."<sup>51</sup> Bishop Schrembs of Cleveland was equally upset about Coughlin's criticism of Roosevelt. While defending the priest's right to speak, he deplored his tactics.<sup>52</sup> Bishop Noll of Fort Wayne, Indiana, reacted with irritation when the press linked him with the Coughlin cause. Noll pointed out that no one had criticized the radio priest more than he had.<sup>53</sup>

Bishop Gallagher of Detroit took a rather ambiguous position toward Coughlin in 1936. Without Gallagher's tacit approval, Coughlin could never have continued his public campaign. Furthermore, Gallagher for sometime had approved of Coughlin's interpretation of the Papal encyclicals. Yet, as the political campaign of 1936 developed, the Bishop's position was somewhat confused. True, he repeatedly defended

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<sup>51</sup>Quoted in New York Times, September 27, 1936, p. 28; Commonweal, October 9, 1936, p. 543.

<sup>52</sup>Tull, "Father Coughlin," p. 214.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 215.



Coughlin's right to freedom of speech, and even his statement on using bullets instead of ballots. Furthermore, on returning from Rome, a journey the American press insisted was taken because the Vatican wanted Coughlin silent, Bishop Gallagher remarked that his famous priest was "just fighting communism." The Bishop also denied that the Vatican wanted Coughlin silenced. He always insisted that "there is nothing in Church doctrine to prevent a priest from taking part in public affairs."<sup>54</sup>

Yet there were other signs which indicated that even Gallagher was getting a little upset about Coughlin's political activities. Upon returning from Rome, Gallagher was asked his opinion on the merits of the three Presidential candidates. He replied: "As far as my present knowledge of the candidates goes, Roosevelt is the best of them."<sup>55</sup> In September, Gallagher went into more detail in a public broadcast. He attacked the money plank in the Lemke platform<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>New York Times, September 6, 1936, p. 19; Commonweal, July 31, 1936, p. 344.

<sup>55</sup>Quoted in New York Times, September 6, 1936, p. 19.

<sup>56</sup>William Lemke, a Republican Representative from North Dakota, ran as the Union Party's candidate on a ticket which incorporated many of Coughlin's principles.

as being unsound. He felt that Roosevelt was a better man to have in the White House because he "has a much better background to work out these monetary problems than this man from the Dakotas." This was a remarkable statement in view of the fact that the money plank in the Union Party program was one of the main contributions of Father Coughlin. Gallagher ended his statement by insisting that the Union Party was not the Catholic party and that there would never be such a Church party in America.<sup>57</sup>

Apparently Gallagher was trying to make clear that while he might defend Coughlin's right to freedom of speech, this did not mean that he agreed with his platform, or that the priest spoke for the Church. It was suggested by one news source that Gallagher had even forced Coughlin to moderate his tone. When Coughlin publicly apologized for calling FDR a "scab President," some saw the Bishop's hand at work. Gallagher, however, denied forcing any action, but subtly suggested that force was not the only way of achieving results.<sup>58</sup> Whatever his motives, many people were not surprised to see Gallagher join the Roosevelt campaign train

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<sup>57</sup>Tull, "Father Coughlin," p. 202; Dyson, "The Quest for Power," p. 78.

<sup>58</sup>New York Times, November 1, 1936, p. 48.

when it stopped in Detroit during October. He joined the President for lunch and, according to one source, discussed the activities of the radio priest. Unfortunately, the details of the conversation are not available, but it is conjectured that Roosevelt warned Gallagher that Coughlin was in a position to bring discredit upon the Church not only by his political activities but by the financial dealings of some of his close associates.<sup>59</sup>

There was also a persistent rumor during 1936 that the Vatican was on the verge of censoring Father Coughlin for his political attacks on FDR. Gallagher's visit to Rome was looked upon as the beginning of this action. Roosevelt received word from Charlton Ogburn, a prominent New York attorney and close friend, that the Vatican was being informed "of the harm which Father Coughlin was doing to the Catholic Church in America by attacking you." A few days later Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, came out with a story criticizing Coughlin for his attacks on Roosevelt.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>New York Times, October 16, 1936, p. 1; Grace Tully, interview with author, June 2, 1965, Washington, D. C.

<sup>60</sup>Charlton Ogburn to Roosevelt, September 10, 1936, President's Personal File, 3794, Roosevelt Papers; Ogburn spoke of having briefed Count Fumasoni Bodi, a powerful Italian nobleman, of the situation. Bodi promised to "transmit these views to the Vatican." Shenton, "The Coughlin Movement," p. 363 fn.

On October 8, 1936, Cardinal Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII), the Vatican Secretary of State, arrived in the United States for a month's vacation and tour. This visit by such a high ranking Vatican official in the midst of a presidential election was the source of countless rumors. The New York Times insisted that he had come over to reassure Roosevelt of the Church's support despite the attacks by Coughlin. Others felt that his presence was to prevent Coughlin from making any more critical remarks about the President. Some students have even traced to Pacelli's arrival the starting point in the decline of Coughlin's fortunes. Unfortunately, Pacelli made no public statement regarding Father Coughlin or the election. Furthermore, Coughlin seemed to take little notice of the Cardinal and continued his campaign unabated.<sup>61</sup>

Speculation grew intense when Pacelli paid a social call on President Roosevelt in November, 1936. The press had to guess at what was discussed, because Bishop Spellman, who was acting as Pacelli's official guide while he was in the

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<sup>61</sup>Dyson, "The Quest for Power," p. 79; Darrow, "Catholic Power," p. 61, says the Cardinal was primarily concerned with communism and the Spanish Civil War. Farley says the trip was made because of Coughlin but did not relate to politics. Farley, interview with author, March 20, 1965, Washington, D. C.

the United States, refused to let reporters question him on the subject of the talk.<sup>62</sup> It seems unlikely that Coughlin was the main topic of conversation, since Roosevelt had already won a smashing victory at the polls. It is more likely that there were some cursory remarks made about the feasibility of sending an ambassador from the United States to the Vatican.<sup>63</sup>

While the Vatican failed to take an official position toward Coughlin, such was not the case with significant elements of the American Catholic press. Commonweal was a long-time supporter of the administration. When the charge of communism first arose in the 1936 campaign, this magazine

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<sup>62</sup>New York Times, November 6, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup>Grace Tully, who was at Hyde Park at the time but not present for the interview, insists it was a mere social call. Interview with author, June 2, 1965, Washington, D. C. An interesting aspect of Cardinal Pacelli's visit to the U. S. was the reaction it produced in the Nazi press. General Erich von Ludendorff, leading a neo-pagan movement in Germany, issued a statement, "Let us not forget that Brother Roosevelt is not only the representative of the Jews and Masons; he is also Cardinal Pacelli's man of confidence and will do everything possible to increase Rome's influence in the great democracy and to prepare for the conquest of the United States by Rome." The National Socialist Angriff, the German Labor Front's organ, published an article saying that FDR had made political commitments to Pacelli for which the Cardinal promised to deliver the Catholic vote to the Democrats. New York Times, November 4, 1936, p. 27; December 6, 1936, p. 42.

immediately denied such an influence in the Roosevelt government. The editor considered it a special burden of the Catholic press to refute such accusations because they emanated from two notable Catholics--Father Coughlin and Al Smith. Besides branding the charge false, the editor warned Smith and Coughlin of the danger of falling prey to their own rhetoric. According to Coughlin and Smith's definition of communism, much of the Church's social teaching would fail to pass the test of purity. "Yet it remains true," wrote the editor, "that the highest teaching authority in the Catholic Church, the Pope, has declared that the main evils of modern society in the sphere of economics are precisely those evils denounced by President Roosevelt." Now Smith and Coughlin had accused him to being a communist because of his stand. Actually, the New Deal was, in the Commonweal's estimation, a rather conservative movement in that it sought to reform institutions of capital "which greed, and private and corporate dictatorship . . . have almost shattered." Only the emotionally disturbed could believe the charge that President Roosevelt was planning a red dictatorship.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Commonweal, February 7, 1936, p. 395; May 4, 1934, p. 2; July 10, 1936, p. 274; October 9, 1936, pp. 541-42.

The Denver Catholic Register, one of the more influential diocesan papers, was also at odds with Coughlin's criticism of Roosevelt. Indeed, while Coughlin was calling FDR a communist, this paper's editor was praising him as a statesman of the highest order. To the charge that Catholics were antagonized by the way FDR handled the Mexican affair, the editor claimed that no Catholic leader of significance "doubted the sincerity of the Roosevelt administration in its handling of this vicious problem." While not officially supporting either candidate, the paper made clear that it could not stand silent but must call for a leader "who was in spirit with the Papal encyclicals." This did not mean that one should vote for Roosevelt, but it did mean that everyone should be aware that if the relief program instituted by the New Deal were cut off "this country would be in the hands of revolutionists in less than a year." Catholics and others should recognize that laissez-faire capitalism was dead and that it was proper for the government to interfere in business. Quadragesimo Anno called for "precisely such a program."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Denver Catholic Register, January 19, 1936, p. 4; January 26, 1936, p. 4; July 19, 1936, p. 1; September 10, 1936, p. 4; November 15, 1936, p. 4.

The editor of Extension magazine, S. A. Baldus, also spoke out in defense of the President. Baldus labeled those elements which were preaching contempt against the President "demagogues" and dangerous "crackpots." As for the claim by the American Liberty League and others that the Constitution was in danger, this was "a lot of hokum," and political rabble-rousing at its lowest level. "Our Constitution," said the editor, "is in no danger--certainly not at the hands of President Roosevelt." Those politicians who felt they could capitalize on this fear as an issue in 1935 were in for a surprise because they would find that "the multitude will be more interested in getting jobs and something to eat, than in 'saving' the Constitution." A person might be too blind to give Roosevelt credit for the obvious improvement in America's economic situation over the last four years, but this should not blind anyone to the fact that there had been such an improvement.<sup>66</sup>

Besides these comments from the press, Roosevelt and the administration had other reasons for believing that Coughlin's efforts were not affecting the Democrats' hold on

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<sup>66</sup>Extension, July, 1965, p. 17; September, 1936, p. 19; Commonweal, February 7, 1936, p. 412; The Catholic Messenger of Davenport, October 29, 1936, p. 4, also expressed similar sentiments.



American Catholics. All during the campaign, letters and resolutions poured into the White House from various Catholic ethnic groups who expressed support for the New Deal. The Catholic Workman, a Bohemian Fraternal Mutual Benefit Association of St. Paul, Minnesota, wired its loyalty to the President. John Straka, President of the National Alliance of Bohemian Catholics, from the national convention in Chicago, sent a similar message. The chairman of the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Alliance of America sent greetings on the part of that organization and pledged "loyal support to his constructive program which is successfully rebuilding economic structure of this country." Elements of the Polish National Catholic Church, meeting in Scranton, Pennsylvania, wired sentiments of "encouragement in your work for the good of the working man through the New Deal." The Slovak Catholic Sokol of New Jersey adopted a resolution at its annual convention endorsing the New Deal and especially the CCC and NYA. The Croatian Catholic Union of America, sent similar greetings. Reverend E. J. Higgins, the National Chaplain of the Catholic War Veterans, read an open letter to Roosevelt over the New York radio. Higgins praised Roosevelt for "opening the treasure vaults of Uncle Sam," by which he had "killed communism with one stroke," and restored faith in

the underprivileged. He concluded by saying that "no political force will be able to destroy this image [as friend of the poor] in the hearts of humanity." On the subject of communism, the Board of Directors of the National Alliance of Bohemian Czeck Catholics of America congratulated FDR on his October speech in which he repudiated left-wing political support. One of the remarkable things about this rather diversified outpouring of support is that Roosevelt saw fit to acknowledge almost all of them. Busy as he was, he often wrote the acknowledgment from his campaign train and in one case had the Department of Commerce trace the Catholic Workman of St. Paul so he could send a note of thanks to the proper people.<sup>67</sup>

More important was the public and private support for Roosevelt which was expressed by many individual Catholics, both priest and layman. Some of this support was prompted by what Catholics considered an unjust campaign by Coughlin. Others were honestly convinced that Roosevelt had helped the

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<sup>67</sup>All of these letters, and more, can be found in Reel 3, Sel. Mat. John Straka to Roosevelt, June 10, 1936; The Catholic Workman to Roosevelt, May 28, 1936; Alexander Aleksis to Roosevelt, July 1, 1936; Mrs. Emily Sznyter to Roosevelt, August 10, 1936; Roosevelt to Joseph G. Prusa, September 14, 1936; The Croatian Catholic Union to Roosevelt, October 11, 1936; Rev. E. J. Higgins to Roosevelt, October 26, 1936.

country out of the depression. John B. Kelly, a millionaire and leader of the Democratic machine in Philadelphia, was dismayed over the political antics of Father Coughlin. Kelly felt that the priest was disgracing his vocation by his attacks on the President. Joseph P. Kennedy, Boston millionaire and loyal supporter of FDR, was a close friend of Coughlin, but he could not stand by and see the priest brand the President a communist. In a speech to the Democratic Businessmen's League of Massachusetts in October, Kennedy called FDR "a God-fearing ruler who has given his people an increased measure of social justice." Kennedy criticized those who sought to confuse the public into believing that the social justice of the Roosevelt administration was communism. He pointed to two facts. First, FDR had insisted upon religious freedom when granting diplomatic recognition to Russia. Second, and more decisive, Kennedy reminded his audience that Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago had praised Roosevelt for his work. "Who in the face of the eloquent testimony of Cardinal Mundelein," asked Kennedy, "can doubt the President's stand on the great issues between man and his Maker?" Kennedy concluded by sardonically pointing out that if Roosevelt was the dictator some claimed, he would

long ago have silenced the radio priest.<sup>68</sup>

A third layman who was active in the Roosevelt cause during 1936 was Frank P. Walsh of New York. Walsh was a long-time friend and supporter of the President and was active in the Catholic promotion of the Child Labor amendment. He was dismayed at the sympathy which the Coughlin charges of communism in the administration were receiving in Catholic circles. Walsh was interested in trying to stop what appeared as a move to set up the Catholic Church as the special institutional foe of international communism. As a member of the Executive Committee of the Progressive National Committee, he supported Roosevelt for re-election and publicly decried the smear tactics of his opponents.<sup>69</sup>

Among priests there was also a sizable segment ready to defend the President. Reverend Bryan J. McEntegart, a Director of the Catholic Charities of New York, expressed enthusiasm for the social security act and for the NRA at the annual meeting of the National Conference of Catholic

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<sup>68</sup>Quoted in New York Times, October 25, 1936, p. 33; Tull, "Father Coughlin," p. 213; Shenton, "The Coughlin Movement," p. 367 fn. Kennedy also cited the speech of Father John A. Ryan to prove Roosevelt was not a communist.

<sup>69</sup>J. C. Walsh to F. P. Walsh, October 5, 1936, Box 95, and Scrapbook No. 27, F. P. Walsh Papers; Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt, p. 182.

Charities held in Seattle, Washington. "Planning has replaced the laissez-faire idea," said McEntegart, and "this is good as long as it follows the mean suggested by Leo XIII [of] acting for the common good."<sup>70</sup> Reverend Wilfrid Parsons, who had earlier attacked the idea that Father Coughlin was speaking for the Church in economic matters, went to great lengths in America in 1935 to emphasize this point and to show that Coughlin's ideas were loosely constructed.<sup>71</sup> As for Coughlin's assertion that the Roosevelt administration was filled with communists, Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen of New York and Reverend Francis J. Haas agreed with Frank Walsh that the Catholic Church should not be set up as a sort of anticommunist front. Sheen declared that rather than attacking communists, Catholics should "go out and find what is good in them."<sup>72</sup> Haas wrote to Father John J. Burke, Secretary of the NCWC, expressing concern that the denunciations of communism being made by certain Catholics created the impression that the Church's own program was a negative

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<sup>70</sup>Rev. Bryan J. McEntegart, "Catholicism and Social Welfare," NCCC Proceedings, August 2-5, 1936, Seattle, Washington.

<sup>71</sup>Rev. Wilfrid Parsons to Rev. John A. Ryan, May 14, 1935, Ryan Papers; Tull, "Father Coughlin," p. 132.

<sup>72</sup>Quoted in Commonweal, March 20, 1936, p. 576.

one. "It is my judgment," wrote Haas,

. . . that the cause of religion is hurt in our country by the fact that the secular press features only the condemnation of Communists and neglects reference to the paramount fact that the Church has an affirmative, constructive program for social justice.<sup>73</sup>

Father Sheehy of Catholic University, at the suggestion of Senator O'Mahoney, toured the West, visiting a number of bishops and priests. Upon his return, he reported that "some extraordinary things" were underway to counteract Coughlin's efforts in the campaign.<sup>74</sup>

Equally robust were the efforts of Reverend John A. Ryan. Indeed, this priest played the most active role of any during the campaign. His support took both private and public form. In his private correspondence Ryan tried to allay the suspicions aroused by Coughlin and other opponents of the administration. On the charge that the administration favored communism and had demonstrated this in its dealings with Russia and Mexico, Ryan was quick to reply. "The Mexican Bishops," he pointed out, did not want any interference by the United States "as that would hurt the

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<sup>73</sup>Rev. Francis J. Haas to Rev. John J. Burke, June 3, 1936, Haas Correspondence.

<sup>74</sup>Quoted in Lunt, "Frank Murphy," p. 151.

Catholic in Mexico." Moreover, Roosevelt was President of the United States, not of Mexico, "and a Catholic's attitude toward him ought to be determined by the kind of administration he has given to our own country."<sup>75</sup> All this hysteria about communists in government confirmed Ryan's suspicion that most Catholics were "extremely gullible in their reactions to professional hunters of alleged Reds." He wondered how anyone who knew "anything about Catholic social teaching" could accept the charges being leveled against Roosevelt. The only "Reds" in the Roosevelt administration were those "who are sufficiently 'red' to believe in social justice."<sup>76</sup>

Ryan also supported Roosevelt among the Catholic press. When it appeared that Father James Gillis, editor of The Catholic World, was becoming disenchanted with the administration because of its fiscal policies, Ryan promptly wrote a letter to the editor. Using economic statistics, Ryan argued to Gillis that the current national debt was not dangerous; that in fact, it could go much higher. As for

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<sup>75</sup>Rev. John Ryan to Miss Kathryn Gazda, October 28, 1936, Ryan Papers.

<sup>76</sup>Rev. John Ryan to R. F. McAuley, May 21, 1934, and to Mrs. Roy E. Grimmer, April 2, 1935, Ryan Papers.

the constitutional integrity of the New Deal, Ryan argued that the Court had precedent on both sides of the issue and that the President had to take into consideration the needs of the people more than the subtle meanings of the Constitution. Furthermore, the Popes were more radical than the New Deal. If Roosevelt was defeated, wrote Ryan, the victors would not be men with either "the desire or competence to provide a more perfect program of social justice." If Roosevelt lost, it would be "the Burbons" who triumphed.<sup>77</sup>

Ryan had less success when dealing with Patrick Scanlan, editor of The Brooklyn Tablet, who violently opposed the administration during the 1936 campaign. Scanlan's major charges were over the recognition of Russia and relations with Mexico. He filled his paper with anti-Roosevelt material during 1936, and he usually played up the comments of Father Coughlin. Ryan did not attempt to dissuade Scanlan from this course but rather sought to make public the unreasonable bias of the editor. This led him into a personal feud with Scanlan which took the form of letter and counterletter published in the pages of The Brooklyn Tablet. Scanlan called Ryan a blind supporter of

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<sup>77</sup> Rev. John Ryan, "Open Letter to the Editor," The Catholic World, CXLIII (April, 1936), 22-26.



the President. Ryan replied that Scanlan was a professional "Roosevelt hater."<sup>78</sup>

While this dialogue was confined to the readers of the diocesan press (a rather select audience) Ryan did not restrict his activities to this narrow field. As early as February, 1936, he publicly called for a program of social justice which would institutionalize many of the advances made under the New Deal. He dismissed as "silly" Al Smith's charge that the New Deal was communistic. In his peroration the priest remarked:

If the present administration is not continued in office, there will follow another orgy of excessive capital investment, excessive plant capacity and soon thereafter another depression. And that depression will be incomparably more devastating than the one from which we have now partially emerged.<sup>79</sup>

Ryan's most valuable service, however, was played later in the campaign as a semiofficial apologist for the administration against the attack by Father Coughlin. From an early position of sympathy for the radio priest, Ryan had come to view him as loose in his thinking and dangerous in

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<sup>78</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan to Patrick F. Scanlan [n.d.], Ryan Papers, 1936-1937; The Brooklyn Tablet, May 29, 1937, p. 11.

<sup>79</sup>Quoted in New York Times, February 16, 1936, II, 1.

his speech. In May, 1936, he privately characterized Coughlin's economic program as being poorly put together. "It contains," wrote Ryan, "no definite proposals for practical and beneficial action in the field of social or economic reforms." The idea of a central banking scheme, which was the only definite part of Coughlin's program, Ryan termed "all wrong and futile."<sup>80</sup>

As the campaign of 1936 drew to a climax, more and more friends of the administration grew concerned over Father Coughlin's effectiveness with the voters. Even Jim Farley, who later predicted that FDR would carry all but two states, was apprehensive over the attractiveness of the communist charge made by Coughlin. In September, 1936, Ryan received word from James J. Hoey, a New York politician and friend of Roosevelt, that he had attended a political conference at Hyde Park during which word was passed about that the President faced a greater danger from Coughlin than from Landon. This was obviously an exaggeration, but when Senator Joseph O'Mahoney of Wyoming also supported Hoey's contention, Father Ryan grew worried. Hoey and O'Mahoney's great fear was that Coughlin's charges of communism would stick in the

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<sup>80</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan to Richard A. Froehlinger, May 22, 1935, Ryan Papers.

Catholic mind. They pointed out that the radio priest had been received enthusiastically by Holy Name organizations when he made these accusations. They called on Ryan to speak out publicly against Coughlin.<sup>81</sup>

It is difficult to explain why Ryan did accept this role of public defender of the administration. Although an admirer of the New Deal, he had never been an intimate of the President, nor had he contributed anything directly to the social reforms passed during the first administration. Some months after the 1936 election, Ryan explained his decision to take on the role suggested by Hoey. The priest insisted that someone had to prevent the imminent "diversion of millions of votes from Mr. Roosevelt to Mr. Lemke." While the election results hardly substantiate this contention, Ryan pointed out that "the managers of the national Democratic campaign were unanimous in the belief that this diversion of votes might defeat Roosevelt." Furthermore, if this defeat could be traced to the political activities of a Catholic priest, the consequences in terms of public resentment against the Church would be substantial. As Ryan saw the situation, many thousands of Catholics felt that Lemke's

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<sup>81</sup>James J. Hoey to Rev. John Ryan, September 23, 1936, Ryan Papers.

views, drawn from Coughlin, had the approval of the Catholic Church. Someone had to erase this impression and Ryan did not regret for a minute that he had adopted this role. He concluded, "I am glad I made that radio speech. I regard it as one of the most effective and beneficial acts that I have ever performed in the interest of my religion and my country."<sup>82</sup>

After making his decision to speak for the administration, Ryan discovered that Hoey and others had certain definite ideas on what should be mentioned. Hoey suggested that Coughlin's name be mentioned in the speech, as the President was expecting this. Hoey, O'Mahoney and Charles E. Michelson, Democratic publicity chairman, had a hand in revising Ryan's original draft. On October 8, 1936, Ryan went on a national radio hookup to speak on the subject, "Roosevelt Safeguards America."<sup>83</sup>

Ryan offered two major themes: that there was no basis for the charge that Roosevelt was under communist influence, and that Father Coughlin's economic thought was

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<sup>82</sup>Letter to editor, The Catholic Transcript, June 17, 1937, p. 4; Broderick, Right Reverend, p. 229.

<sup>83</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan to James J. Hoey, October 27, 1936, Ryan Papers; Broderick, Right Reverend, p. 225.

outdated and in no way connected with the Papal encyclicals. In the first place, Ryan emphatically denied that Roosevelt or his advisors, such as Tugwell, Frankfurter, and Sidney Hillman, were under communist influence. People who made such an accusation were breaking the eighth commandment. On the contrary, it was the work of the New Deal which had frustrated the growth of communism in the United States. As for Coughlin's economic theory, Ryan insisted that, from all his experience, the radio priest's proposals were all wrong. "If . . . enacted," said Ryan, "they would prove disastrous to the great majority of the American people, particularly to the wage earners." Ryan insisted that these proposals found "no support in the encyclicals of either Pope Leo XIII or Pope Pius XI." He closed his address with an appeal that his listeners not vote "against the man who has shown a deeper and more sympathetic understanding of your needs and who has brought about more fundamental legislation for labor and for social justice than any other President in American history."<sup>84</sup>

The reaction to Ryan's speech was rapid in developing.

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<sup>84</sup>Pamphlet, "Roosevelt Safeguards America," October 8, 1936, published by Democratic National Committee, Ryan Papers.

Members of the administration were swift to forward their approval. James Farley wrote to Ryan that the speech had a "real effect in every section of the country." Farley, who did not "know of any address made during the campaign [that was] more effective," immediately had the Democratic party reproduce copies of the speech for distribution.<sup>85</sup> Josephus Daniels wrote from Mexico City that the speech had "heartened" him and that he was sure it "had a great effect with the voters." Homer S. Cummings, Attorney General, called Ryan's remarks "admirable in every way." President Roosevelt sent a telegram of appreciation.<sup>86</sup>

While the remarks of Farley and Daniels can be attributed to the generous nature of these men, there is some evidence that Ryan's speech was, in fact, used effectively during the campaign. In Washington, Joseph R. Burko, student director of the Roosevelt University Clubs, reported having distributed many copies. John W. Chase of New York wrote to Ryan requesting copies of his speech to use in swinging Catholic voters behind Congressman Sisson, a

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<sup>85</sup>James A. Farley to Rev. John Ryan, October 31, 1936, Ryan Papers.

<sup>86</sup>Josephus Daniels to Ryan, November 9, 1936, Ryan Papers; Broderick, Right Reverend, pp. 228-29.

Roosevelt supporter who was having difficulty.<sup>87</sup>

Meanwhile, the Catholic press displayed an ambivalent attitude toward the entire affair. The Pittsburg Catholic mirrored the opinion of Bishop Hugh C. Boyle when it wrote that the speech would probably be beneficial.<sup>88</sup> The Omaha True Voice and America both agreed that Coughlin's economic thought was outdated and that Father Ryan was the most authoritative Catholic voice in this field.<sup>89</sup> The Baltimore Catholic Review and The Brooklyn Tablet agreed that neither Coughlin nor Ryan had any business in the political arena, although the Baltimore paper was not convinced by Ryan's claim that communism had not found a home in the Roosevelt administration.<sup>90</sup> The Catholic Transcript editorialized on the possibility of having a bishop come out for Landon so that all candidates would have a prominent prelate backing them. Yet the editor admitted that Coughlin had instigated Ryan's speech by his own continued intemperance of speech.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>John W. Case to Elizabeth Sweeney, telegram, October 13, 1936, Ryan Papers.

<sup>88</sup>Broderick, Right Reverend, p. 228.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., pp. 227-28.

<sup>90</sup>New York Times, October 16, 1936, p. 21.

<sup>91</sup>October 22, 1936, p. 4.

The Davenport Catholic Messenger pointed out that Ryan was teaching economics before Coughlin was born. The editor gave no credence to the charge by Coughlin that Ryan was a paid political spokesman for the New Deal.<sup>92</sup> The Catholic Telegraph, while taking no editorial position, did display numerous political advertisements which used Ryan's address as a keynote to exhort the reader to vote Democratic.<sup>93</sup>

Commonweal, on the other hand, looked upon the entire affair as evidence that there was no "Catholic vote." If such prominent Catholics as Father Coughlin, Al Smith, and Father Ryan could all find themselves on different sides of the political fence, surely there was no "Catholic political solidarity," as the myth would have it. In any case, the editor was convinced that Ryan's remarks would have little effect upon Coughlin's followers, who had to recourse to emotion rather than reason.<sup>94</sup>

Finally, in further estimation of Ryan's effort, some mention should be made of the volume of personal mail he received soon after October 8. The priest admitted to a

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<sup>92</sup>October 15, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>93</sup>October 29, 1936, p. 7.

<sup>94</sup>Commonweal, October 23, 1936, pp. 597-98.



correspondent that he had received "at least 1200 letters" from Coughlin's supporters and that most of them were filled with derogatory remarks. In contrast he could point to only 200 letters favoring his speech. Yet Ryan felt that even this small amount of approval justified his making the speech. Significantly, he mentioned that he had not received more than three or four letters of approval from priests. A closer examination of these pro-Ryan letters reveals a number of interesting characteristics. A few expressed sympathy for Roosevelt because he appointed Catholics to his Cabinet. Others insisted that Coughlin was distorting the social message of the Church and should be silenced. Such letters were generally from a better educated audience. In contrast, the anti-Ryan mail revealed a poorly educated group. Some of the themes which dominated this correspondence were fear that communism was taking over the Roosevelt administration, distaste of recognition of Russia, criticism of the manner in which Roosevelt treated anticlericalism in Mexico, and the fact that the President was a member of the Masonic order. The tone of these letters revealed extreme class bitterness and a note of anticlericalism.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>See Ryan Papers where these items are all grouped together in 1936 file. Shenton, "Coughlin Movement," p. 366,

The smashing victory that Roosevelt achieved in 1936 made all the dire predictions appear chimerical. The President amassed over twenty-seven million popular votes compared to Landon's sixteen million and Lemke's 900,000. Even more impressive was the electoral vote with FDR capturing all but two states for a grand total of 523. American Catholics voted overwhelmingly for Roosevelt in 1936. In this they simply followed the current of the times which affected their fellow citizens in like manner.

The evidence that Catholics supported the President is impressive. On one level is the testimony of numerous individuals. Father Ryan, working on the basis of his own circle, estimated that at least seventy per cent of the Catholic clergy in the country voted for Roosevelt. He knew personally that a great number of his fellow professors at Catholic University supported the Democratic ticket.<sup>96</sup> Father Sheehy corroborated this estimate. Sheehy was proud of his own role in swinging an estimated seventy-six per cent of

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points to the fact that most of the letters attacking Ryan were from Irish and German writers. Too much should not be made of this, however, because Roosevelt received mail critical of Coughlin from the same ethnic group.

<sup>96</sup>Broderick, Right Reverend, pp. 231-32; Ryan to Henry G. Leach, March 19, 1937, Ryan Papers.

the Catholic vote behind Roosevelt. In a letter to the President some years later, he outlined his role as threefold: (1) contacting personally many bishops; (2) supplying Democratic campaign material to the Catholic press; and (3) sending the Ryan speech to 11,000 Catholic pastors.<sup>97</sup>

Before the election results were in, Sheehy reported to Margaret LeHand that his visits with numerous bishops and priests revealed a strong sentiment for the President. "There is a feeling prevalent among the priests," said Sheehy, "that the priesthood, through Father Coughlin, has betrayed the President, and some extraordinary things are being attempted to offset this betrayal."<sup>98</sup>

From Kentucky came the observations of P. H. Callahan, another friend of the administration. Callahan presented a detailed vote analysis. He examined areas in his own state where large religious congregations were located and found that in most cases these areas supported Roosevelt by large margins. On a nation-wide basis, he delineated the voting of seven states which he characterized as having the largest

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<sup>97</sup>Rev. Maurice S. Sheehy to Roosevelt, May 13, 1940, Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

<sup>98</sup>Rev. Maurice S. Sheehy to Margaret LeHand, October 5, 1936, Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

Catholic population: New Mexico, Arizona, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maryland, California, and Connecticut. By contrasting the voting record of these states in 1932 and 1936, Callahan demonstrated that all had given Roosevelt a larger majority in 1936 than in 1932.<sup>99</sup>

Monsignor Robert F. Keegan, Cardinal Hayes' assistant, wrote to the President after the election expressing congratulations. Keegan called Coughlin's activities "grossly intemperate" and concluded:

I am proud and happy that my vote and the vote of every friend whom I could influence, went to swell the magnificent total. . . . You are an answer to prayer--the prayer of all of us close to the man in the street, the factory, on the farm, and for whom any other result would have been the worst calamity that could have befallen America.<sup>100</sup>

There is also more scientific evidence of Catholic

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<sup>99</sup>P. H. Callahan to Joseph Polin [n.d.], Ryan Papers, 1936; P. H. Callahan to Edward Keating [n.d.], Box 95, Frank Walsh Papers. The Callahan figures are as follows:

	<u>1932</u>	<u>1936</u>
N.M.-----	40,772	47,380
Ariz. -----	36,860	51,930
R.I. -----	31,338	41,851
Mass. -----	63,189	172,417
Md. -----	130,130	148,000
Calif. -----	476,255	735,825
Conn. -----	6,788 (Hoover)	103,264

<sup>100</sup>Msgr. Robert Keegan to Roosevelt, November 5, 1936, President's Personal File, 628, Roosevelt Papers.

support for FDR in 1936. Various public opinion polls indicated that the President received a large share of the ethnic and religious vote. One study concluded that eighty-one per cent of all Catholics who voted supported Roosevelt.<sup>101</sup> Both the Gallup and Roper polls indicated that Roosevelt had received substantial support from Catholics, Gallup estimating it at over seventy per cent.<sup>102</sup> The vote of the large urban centers in the United States, where most Catholic votes were congregated, went to Roosevelt, who won with smashing majorities in Chicago, Detroit, New Orleans, St. Louis, New York, Philadelphia, and Milwaukee. Roosevelt won every one of the twelve cities in the United States with a population of over 500,000.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Darrow, "Catholic Political Power," p. 35 fn.

<sup>102</sup>Gosnell, Champion Campaigner, p. 166, who also says that FDR got only a bare majority of the Protestant vote in 1936. A Good Neighbor League was set up by the Democratic National Committee under the leadership of prominent Protestants such as Dr. Stanley High and Methodist Bishop Edgar Blake to offset the pro-Catholic image of the party. See Gosnell, p. 159.

<sup>103</sup>Robinson, They Voted for Roosevelt, pp. 82, 103, 110, 120, 130, 149, 180.

The following figures are indicative:

<u>City</u>	<u>Demo.</u>	<u>Rep.</u>
Chicago (Cook County)	1,253,164	701,206
New Orleans	108,012	10,254
Detroit	404,055	190,732
St. Louis	260,063	127,887
New York	1,454,590	480,302
Philadelphia	539,757	329,881
Milwaukee	221,512	54,811

Lemke and Coughlin were buried in this avalanche of votes. Yet some discussion of their support is relevant because of its special characteristics. Lemke received only two per cent of all votes cast, but he was not on the ballot in every state. Samuel Lubell has analyzed Lemke's support and concluded that outside of his home state, he carried over ten per cent in only thirty-nine counties in the United States. Of these counties, twenty-one were "more than 50 per cent Catholic." Furthermore, twenty-eight of them were predominantly German. Lubell has concluded: "Drawn primarily from Irish and German Catholics, Lemke's following represented the most belligerently isolationist voters in the country."<sup>104</sup>

Explaining why Catholics voted for Roosevelt is another matter. Some scholars attribute this support to gratitude for the welfare measures of the New Deal. It seems, however, that more than welfare was at stake. As one

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<sup>104</sup>Lubell, Future of American Politics, p. 152. Lubell's findings have been challenged, however, by William Leuchtenburg, Franklin Roosevelt, pp. 195 fn., 183 fn., who feels it was "unlikely that foreign affairs were that compelling in 1936." One might ask how compelling an issue is required to be to sway two per cent of the voters. Tull, "Father Coughlin," also challenges Lubell's interpretation, attributing Lemke's vote to support for Coughlin's ideas and disenchantment with the progress made under the New Deal.

historian has remarked, "the newer ethnic groups in the cities swung to Roosevelt, mostly out of gratitude for the New Deal welfare measures, but partly out of delight with being granted 'recognition.'"<sup>105</sup> This seems a balanced and judicious interpretation. If this analysis has shown anything it is that Roosevelt was solicitous of the Catholic Church. He never failed to respond to a note of gratitude or encouragement from Catholics. His appointment policy was enough to make anyone forget the bigotry of the past.

There were a myriad of reactions to the Roosevelt victory. Certainly the contention by Commonweal, that Roosevelt might be "in trouble among Catholic voters in the industrial states," and that Lemke's vote "will be a large one," seems ridiculous in retrospect.<sup>106</sup> When the votes were counted it was time for a reappraisal. Cardinal Hayes in New York wired his congratulations and thanked the President for receiving Cardinal Pacelli.<sup>107</sup> In Detroit, Father

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<sup>105</sup>Leuchtenburg, Franklin Roosevelt, pp. 184-85, who also points out that FDR made one judicial appointment in every four to a Catholic. The ratio under Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover, was one of every twenty-five. On election day Roosevelt swept the urban areas of over 100,000 by a count of 104 to 2.

<sup>106</sup>July 3, 1936, p. 254.

<sup>107</sup>Patrick Cardinal Hayes to Roosevelt, November 6, 1936, Reel 3, Sel. Mat.

Coughlin announced on the radio that the election had convinced him to withdraw "from all radio activity in the best interest of all the people."<sup>108</sup> Naturally Father Ryan rejoiced at the results and accepted the invitation of the President to render the benediction at the inauguration.

Elements of the Catholic press varied in their reaction to the election. Commonweal dwelt at length upon the "truly representative" vote the President received. He had support from virtually every section of the United States and from every class and interest.<sup>109</sup> Father Gillis, editor of The Catholic World, admitted that he voted for Roosevelt but was disturbed because he feared the President would use his victory to embark upon adventures such as taking the United States into the World Court. Remarkably, Gillis insisted that the President did not have a mandate for great change in the election of 1936.<sup>110</sup> The Brooklyn Tablet admitted that the people of the United States had expressed a "desire to allow the government to develop along

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<sup>108</sup>Commonweal, November 20, 1936, p. 100; in fact, Coughlin was shortly back on the air and remained active on the side of isolationism until the early 1940's.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., November 13, 1936, p. 59.

<sup>110</sup>The Catholic World, CXLIV (December, 1936), 258-60.



new and modern ideas rather than according to the ideas of those who hold to the traditional constitutional form." The editor warned that now more than ever was it necessary to remain vigilant "to safeguard this nation against the dangers of an organized, militant Communism."<sup>111</sup>

It should be made clear that Coughlin's personal attacks against the President boomeranged. Roosevelt was a popular figure, and the intemperate language used against him by Coughlin only served to alienate many Catholics from the priest's cause. Others, perhaps neutral about the entire affair, became greatly embarrassed by the spectacle of a Catholic priest attacking the President of the United States. There is little question that this embarrassment was instrumental in causing Ryan and other members of the hierarchy to take a more active pro-Roosevelt position in the campaign than had originally been anticipated.<sup>112</sup> Coughlin's political

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<sup>111</sup>November 7, 1936, p. 10.

<sup>112</sup>Josephus Daniels was so impressed "because the great loyalty to their party and their principles caused the large body of Catholic voters to turn a deaf ear to the pleas of Mr. Carmody, Fr. Coughlin and Al Smith . . ." that he suggested to Roosevelt that either Cardinal Mundelein or Cardinal Hayes offer prayer before the inaugural address as a reward. He pointed to Mundelein's role as pivotal. Josephus Daniels to Roosevelt, December 4, 1936, President's Secretary File, I, Diplomatic Corr., Mexico, Box 2, Roosevelt Papers.

activities contributed to this shift. Of course, there were other major factors in Roosevelt's triumph which operated upon the Catholic voter in the same way they operated on all. These included the indisputable fact that economic improvement had been made, that Roosevelt was a better campaigner than his opponents, and that the Democrats had large shares of patronage with which to operate.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup>Other reasons have been suggested as to why Coughlin failed to win large Catholic backing for his candidate. Tull, "Father Coughlin," p. 224, emphasizes that many Catholics did not want to throw away their vote on a hopeless cause. This reason does not really seem justified. Has anyone ever investigated how much of a motivational factor "winning" is in an election? Shannon, American Irish, p. 313, has an interesting passage in which he points out that Coughlin lost his support when he threw off the special demeanor of a Catholic priest and engaged in bitter political diatribe. His followers were ambiguous in their feelings. "They wanted to be respectable and proper but they also wanted to rebel and protest. A priest who voiced radical, rebellious sentiments in dignified . . . tones and by use of religious imagery was uniquely positioned to heal this division. . . . When he abandoned his dignity and priestly manner, Father Coughlin lowered himself in the eyes of many to just another cheap, shouting politician."

## CONCLUSION

In attempting to draw certain conclusions from the foregoing material, it might be wise to re-emphasize the limitation of this study. As was mentioned earlier, most of the papers of prominent churchmen of this period are still closed to historians. This meant that much of the material on the Church had to be obtained from public sources. Such a limitation, however, need not be harmful unless one feels that there was a wide divergency in the 1930's between the public and private thoughts of prominent Catholics. From what private sources are available, such a divergence does not appear. Further, it might be argued that only by beginning the dialogue on the basis of public statements can it be hoped that future historians will be given an opportunity to examine private collections to "set the record straight."

If we attempt to analyze some of the salient features in the relationship between Roosevelt and American Catholics during the period from 1932 to 1936, we must begin by discussing the sympathy which the Church exhibited for Roosevelt's

candidacy in 1932. This sympathy seems to have been the result of a number of factors. First, Catholics remembered Roosevelt as the man who had campaigned for Al Smith in 1928 and who had spoken out against religious bigotry. Second, Roosevelt was on close terms with many members of the hierarchy in New York and had exhibited considerable finesse when acting as Governor. Finally, Al Smith's campaign in New England for the Democratic ticket put the final imprimatur on the Roosevelt ticket.

The public reaction of many prominent Catholics to the depression revealed a radicalism which was surprising to many observers. Catholic social spokesmen such as Father Ryan, Father Gillis, and members of the hierarchy, stressed the need for Federal action to combat the ravages of the depression. They felt that national planning was a logical step to take during the crisis. Such an attitude made for a receptive state of mind toward the innovations which Roosevelt brought to Washington.

The advanced state of Catholic social thought was seen in the generally favorable reaction with which Catholics greeted the New Deal measures. Such measures as NRA, AAA, and the labor policies of the New Deal, were lauded by Catholics as being in complete accord with the Papal encyclicals.

Although the congruency between the Pope's ideas and the New Deal was never so close as some would imagine, the Papal encyclicals were couched in such general terms that much was left to the imagination. Many Catholics wanted to see the New Deal as being in the same tradition as the Popes and this made their reaction favorable.

But the general terms of Catholic social principles also produced some rather disturbing features when individuals attempted to express concrete analogies between the Pope's intention and the measures of the New Deal. Catholics produced a startling variety of thought. A prominent churchman such as Father John Ryan saw the New Deal as only a beginning and wanted more national planning. Another looked upon Roosevelt's election as an indication that the power of the Federal government would be curtailed. There was often direct contradiction over the interpretation of the Church's social teaching. Some said that the Pope wanted all laborers to join a union. Others insisted that forcing a man to join a union in order to get a job was against Catholic teaching. There was also an ambiguity in Catholic reaction to child labor and the role of the rural dweller in our society. While large segments of the Catholic hierarchy and many prominent prelates argued vigorously for the passage of the

Wagner Labor Act, another element of the Church publicly lobbied against the child labor amendment. This latter group argued that the amendment would lead to Federal control of children. Apparently the connection between the strengthening of American labor and the ending of exploitation of child labor was not readily apparent. Yet it should be emphasized that in this area, as in most, a large segment of Catholic thought was consistently progressive in outlook. Father Haas and Father Ryan both recognized the need of protesting exploitation at all stages.

The most vivid example of contradictory philosophies in Catholic thought at this time was between Father Ryan and Father Luiggiti. Luiggiti was a Jeffersonian agrarian who felt that the only hope for society was to return to a nation of small family-owned farms. While admitting and accepting the need for Federal assistance in his agricultural endeavors, Luiggiti frowned upon any plan to combine farming operations into giant combines. Father Ryan, on the other hand, worked more in the industrial field and felt that if small businesses could not compete with large ones in wages they should be allowed to die out.

Despite the fact that Roosevelt was aware of the political strength of American Catholics and was sympathetic

to their needs, he seldom let their advocacy of a particular line of action influence his own decision when it seemed against the best interest of the country. Whenever Roosevelt and the Church came into direct conflict, such as on the recognition of Russia, and dealing with anticlericalism in Mexico, it was the Church which gave way. But by simply listening to their grievances Roosevelt often took the sting out of much of the Catholic attack. He opened the door of communication and made a point of considering Catholic sensibilities on an issue. In short, he was a master of tact when dealing with the Church. This was usually enough to satisfy most Catholic critics. In fact, Roosevelt's attentiveness to Catholic bishops occasionally paid off in terms of political reality. The one instance that stands out is his appearance at Catholic University. This appearance gained him valuable allies in the future debate over the recognition of Russia. His handling of Father Walsh in connection with this priest's protest over Russian recognition is another example of the fruitfulness of his tact and accessibility.

After four years of the New Deal American Catholics could look back upon a period which saw them make impressive gains politically, socially, and intellectually.

Catholics were now permanent fixtures in the national government and in the group surrounding the President. Many Church leaders were in close personal contact with the President. Catholic educators and reformers such as Father Ryan and Father McGowan could look back upon the welfare measure of the New Deal as being in close harmony with the social encyclicals of the Popes. By 1936, it appeared that American Catholics had reached a position of respect and integration into public life in the United States. They had come a long way from the alienation which they sensed after the 1928 election. Father Coughlin was a disturbing note in this harmony, but it might be argued that only after the Church had gained sufficient respect under Roosevelt could such a phenomenon as the radio priest have been possible in the 1936 election.



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## VITA

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## EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

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Title of Thesis: "Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Catholicism, 1932-1936"

Approved:

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Date of Examination:

December 3, 1965